

Department of Political and Economic Studies (Development Studies)  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki

**IN THE NAME OF VIVIR BIEN**

**INDIGENEITY, STATE FORMATION, AND POLITICS**  
**IN EVO MORALES' BOLIVIA**

**Eija M. Ranta**

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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# ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of the politics of indigeneity in the contemporary Bolivian state transformation process. It is a story of an attempt to transform the state through indigenous ideas in a poor and ethnically heterogeneous country in the Global South. By following the notion of *vivir bien*, good life, a term that has emerged in Bolivia's political and policy discourses since the election of Evo Morales as the first indigenous president of the country in December 2005, it examines contested articulations between policy, politics, and power. Through ethnographic examination of what is said and done in the name of good life by key policy actors such as ministers, public servants, development experts, and indigenous activists, this study aims to develop a critical understanding of the notion of good life both as a democratizing discursive construction and as a contested practice. It pretends to unveil the multiple and intricate ways in which power works – is articulated and contested – not solely between the governing regime and its political opposition but also within the ruling political party, within the state bureaucracy, and between and within local social movements.

Methodologically, this study is a response to the challenge of the changing circumstances of indigenous peoples in contemporary Bolivia: if representatives of social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions have shifted from rural communities to the presidential palace and ministerial cabinets, the methodological choices of those who study indigenous peoples have to respond to this situation. In line with this, this study discusses how the bureaucratic context of the state in which new indigenous policy ideas circulate can be grasped, ethnographically, by tracking the notion of *vivir bien*. Additionally, it asks what comparative advantage an ethnographic approach brings to the examination of policy making and state formation amidst processes of social change. The data is based on a six-month ethnographic fieldwork in La Paz between 2008 and 2009. Additional insights are drawn from earlier stays in Bolivia for a total of 13 months.

Amidst global inequalities, there is an urgent demand for the examination of critical political alternatives and perceptions of new kinds of 'development', which are emerging in the Global South in response to – and often opposed to – the global capitalist political economy. The examination of the notion of *vivir bien* in contemporary Bolivian state transformation process pretends to make a contribution to this end. Consequently, this study examines theoretically how discourses and practices of social change are produced; how the state works in processes of change; and, how power and rule operate in the context of indigenous challenge to state formation. It makes a case for the utility of

moving at the intersections of social anthropology, political science and development studies; and, from a theoretical perspective, at the intersections of postcolonial critique, postmodern Foucauldian approaches and political economy.

Although global and local processes are crucial to indigenous experience, this study indicates that the state is, and has increasingly become, an important reference point for indigenous peoples and social movements. The Bolivian state is the object of transformation through the application of indigenous policy and the provision of political alternatives but it is also the subject through which changes are executed. The politics of indigeneity is perceived as a contested combination of identity concerns and resource struggles. Today, the battles are also fought through state policy, which is a heterogeneous and contingent assemblage that produces and articulates diverse forms of power and governance. In the process of indigenous change, as this study illuminates, the state has become a battlefield between three kinds of historically constructed governmental schemes of improvement. Indigenous, neoliberal, and state-led models for social change articulate and often conflict with each other, illustrating the insight that the state works in complex and articulated ways. Furthermore, indicates the study, various forms of power and rule overlap and collide with each other. This conflictive interaction between governmental, disciplinary, and authoritarian forms of power and rule seems to impede and challenge the potential of radically democratizing indigenous ideas by hampering their translation into bureaucratic practice. This has implications for the more normative question of the feasibility of radical political alternatives that aim to counteract economic globalization and the universalism of development ideas through the politics of indigeneity.

**Keywords:** *vivir bien*, decolonization, plurinationalism, sovereignty, indigeneity, social movements, development policy, state formation, politics, power, ethnography, governmentality, postcolonial critique, Bolivia.

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everyday practices: both resource struggles and identity concerns; both hopes for social change and critical assessments of their empirical emergence.

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I come from a small village in southwest Lapland, where I made friends with two very special persons over 25 years ago. Jenny Viitanen, Milja Williams, and I have gone a long way as best friends; one could talk of friends for life. Although we have chosen very different kinds of paths, we have continued to share everything and be there for each

other. There is a mutual trust and understanding, which encourages one to be exactly who one is no matter what. I am eternally grateful that these persons came my way. And now, when my son comes home with Jenny's stepson with whom he shares a classroom; when they close the door of his room and start to play games, do their homework, argue with each other, and, occasionally, even sing a song; I think of the amazing cycle of life – they are just like we were 25 years ago. Gratitude also goes to Clement Antwi Owusu for making my global life both even more global while giving me a sense of belonging and rootedness through our son. Sharing parenthood with you, Clement, has been immensely rewarding. Furthermore, over the years – through my studies and work, through travel in Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua and elsewhere, and via other adventures – I have been privileged to meet and claim as friends many, many amazing people. You all know who you are and I thank everyone for having accompanied me before, now and in the future.

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My father, Martti Ranta, was born to a peasant family in rural Lapland with childhood experiences of war and poverty; he grew up to become a true believer in the power of knowledge and education. A sophisticated and brilliant man, he dedicated his life to teaching and to defending the rights to higher education of young men and women in rural areas. Finally, when retired from the position of secondary school principal in Tervola, the rural village where I grew up, he undertook to fulfill his lifelong dream: PhD studies. Thus, we started our doctoral research at the same time in 2007: my father on the social history of higher education systems in peripheral rural areas of Lapland, and I on another kind of periphery on the other side of the globe. At the time, I did have a vague idea of how I had become interested in development studies and in global–national–local encounters. Yet reading the first drafts of my father's enthusiastic writings, it now became clear to me that a deeply felt sense of injustice, and a commitment to the cause of marginalized peripheries in the face of inequalities, whether global, regional or what so

ever, had a family resonance.

In August 2012, only a few weeks before the defense of his dissertation, a stroke left my father paralyzed and without recognizable ability to read, write, or speak. Consequently, his dream of having a doctoral degree has not been fulfilled to date. It is an irony of fate: from the beginning of our studies, we joked of competing with each other as to who would finish the dissertation first. Now, being in this situation which is the fulfillment of my own long-term professional and personal dreams, I am faced with a bittersweet combination of enormous joy and enormous guilt. I did not want to be the first.

Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to my dear father. I hope that he understands this. And I am sure he does, at some level, in his own ways, in all those mysterious ways in which our brain cells function making unexpected connections and articulations when least expected; and if not now, then someday.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADN	Acción Democrática Nacionalista
AGRUCO	Agroecología Universidad Cochabamba
AIDSESP	Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América
APCOB	Apoyo para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano
APG	Asamblea de los Pueblos Guaraní
ASP	Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos
ATTAC	Association pour une Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America
CEBIAE	Centro Boliviano de Investigación y Acción Educativa
CEDLA	Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina Y el Caribe
CIDA	Canadian Agency for International Development
CIDOB	Central Indígena de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia)
CIPCA	Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado
CNE	Corte Nacional Electoral
COB	Central Obrero Boliviano
COICA	La Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica
COMIBOL	Corporación Minera de Bolivia
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador
CONALCAM	Coordinadora Nacional por el Cambio
CONALDE	Consejo Nacional Democrático
CONAMAQ	Consejo Nacional de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyo
CPE	Constitución Política del Estado
CSCB	Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia
CSCIB	Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
DANIDA	Danish Development Assistance
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Administration
EBRP	Estrategia Boliviana de Reducción de la Pobreza
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America

ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EGTK	Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari
FNMCB-BS	Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia – Bartolina Sisa (Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia – Bartolina Sisa)
FSTMB	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GNI	Gross National Income
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IDA	International Development Association
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDH	Impuesto Directo a los Hidrocarburos
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria
IPSP	Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos
IR	International Relations
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialization
IU	Izquierda Unida
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDRI	Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative
MIP	Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti
MIR	Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria
MITKA	Movimiento Indio Túpac Katari
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario
MRTK	Movimiento Revolucionario Túpaj Katari
MSM	Movimiento Sin Miedo
MUJA	Movimiento Universitario Julián Apaza
NDP	National Development Plan

NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NOVIB	Netherlands Organisation for International Assistance
NSM	New Social Movements
ODA	Official Development Aid
OTB	Organizaciones Territoriales de Base
PCB	Partido Comunista de Bolivia
PCML	Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.
PIB	Partido Indio de Bolivia
PND	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo
PNIO	Plan Nacional para la Igualdad de Oportunidades
PODEMOS	Poder Democrático Social
POR	Partido Obrero Revolucionario
PPB-CN	Plan Progreso para Bolivia – Convergencia Nacional
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSD	Planes Sectoriales de Desarrollo
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TCO	Tierras Comunitarios de Origen
THOA	Taller de Historia Oral Andina
TIPNIS	Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé
UJC	Unión Juvenil Cruceñista
UMSA	Universidad Mayor de San Andrés
UN	United Nations
UNITAS	Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCIP	World Council of Indigenous Peoples
WGIP	Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YPFB	Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales



## PART I: FRAMING THE STUDY

Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the ‘thing’ which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.

Franz Fanon 1990 [1961]: 28

Queremos que el indio deje de vivir de rodillas, que se ponga vertical; libre como espíritu y como productor de bienes. Queremos conquistar con nuestra liberación, la liberación de nuestra cultura milenaria...

Fausto Reinaga 2001 [1970]: 95

In the beginning of my fieldwork I was touched by a story that, I later realized, aptly crystallized some of the key elements of the contemporary process of Bolivian state transformation: deeply rooted ethnic and economic inequalities, hierarchical power relations, hopes for indigenous liberation, and a dream of a new beginning. It was a story about a domestic worker, who, for the first time, confronted her employer through a very simple, but a significant expression: when the employer addressed her, she raised her head and looked her straight in the eyes. It was such a simple gesture that for most outside observers it would have gone unnoticed yet it meant a world of difference both for the domestic servant and the employer. For the domestic servant, coming from humble indigenous origins, it was an act of resistance that challenged ethnically and socially determined hierarchies and power relations that dominated her everyday life. Even without spoken words, it was clear that this look did not demonstrate humility but rather demanded respect. It symbolized the emergence of a new decolonial subject *par excellence*; a new man – or woman – who, as in Fanon’s (1990[1961]) tale above, was at the point of internalizing the possibility of freedom. In this sense, it was the story of a new beginning: of a revolutionary moment in which a person who, due to her indigenous background, had lived her whole life subservient to someone else and had now stood up, as Fausto Reinaga (quoted above), one of the first Bolivian writers on indigenous liberation, anticipated would one day happen.

The story was told to me by Claudia, a young consultant from one of Bolivia’s many ministries, who was a close friend of the employer, someone who had ruthlessly criticized Claudia for working for the *indio* Evo Morales who had “made [indigenous peoples] think too much of themselves”. Due to indigenous political uprising, she believed, indigenous peoples had started to behave “as if they were equal”, an issue which seriously confused

her ideas of the established social order and which was illustrated by her domestic servant's rebellious behavior. No matter whether this incident had actually occurred or whether it was an example of governmental discourses of heroic indigenous liberation circulating among new state actors who rose to public positions after the election of Evo Morales as the first indigenous president of the country in December 2005; it was also a testimony to new challenges faced by those working in a state bureaucracy in the process of state transformation based on indigenous ideas. It highlighted how the notion of indigeneity as a source of liberation – and the questioning of unequal, often ethnically defined, power relations – had started to play a major role in state discourses. It also resonated with how the politics of indigeneity had emerged as a source of contestations and critical challenge within the state arenas where it had become the responsibility of state actors – ministers, vice-ministers, public servants, and consultants among others – to translate these discourses into practice through concrete actions such as policy making.

This is an ethnographic study of the politics of indigeneity in the contemporary Bolivian state transformation process. It is a story of an attempt to transform the state through indigenous ideas in a poor, aid-dependent and ethnically heterogeneous country in the Global South. Thus it resonates with the increasing use of culture and tradition in the construction of political ideologies as alternatives to global processes in many parts of the world. By following the notion of *vivir bien*, good life, a term that has emerged in political discourses, and as the new overarching state policy concept since 2006, it examines contested articulations between (indigenous) policy and politics in contemporary Bolivia. Lately, an abundance of scholarship on the notion of *vivir bien* has emerged (Acosta 2011; Albó 2011; Bautista 2010; Calestani 2009; Estermann 2012; Fabricant 2013; Farah and Vasapollo eds. 2011; Gudynas 2011a, 2011b; Vega 2011; Walsh 2010). Many of these writings concentrate on portraying the notion of good life as comprising indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews. At the centre of my study are governmental discourses and bureaucratic practices that I have encountered while tracing the notion of *vivir bien* through policy analysis, participant-observation, and interviews. Through ethnographic examination of what is said and done in the name of good life by key policy actors such as ministers, public servants, intellectuals, development experts, and indigenous activists, this study aims to develop a critical understanding of the notion of good life both as a discursive construction and as a contested practice.

This study is also a story of contestations, struggles and power relations. Contemporary Bolivia represents a case in which new kinds of actors – social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions – that have for long functioned at the margins of the state (Das and Poole 2004) have attained political power and entry to the sphere of government. This extremely contested process has raised high hopes and deep fears not solely among Bolivians but among academic scholars as well. Consequently, Bolivian movement struggles and political change have become very popular fields of research.

However, especially at the early stages of contemporary change, many observers of Bolivian politics tended to polarize the extremely complex and politically volatile political situation into juxtapositions between Left and Right, government and opposition, highlands and lowlands, or glorious indigenous present and evil neoliberal past – or the reverse, depending on the political and ideological sympathies of the writer. My ethnographic analysis aims at traversing and bridging these juxtapositions by portraying a more nuanced picture of contemporary Bolivian policy making and state formation. In doing this, I am following the traditions of recent ethnographic analyses of Bolivian indigenous experience (Goldstein 2004; Gustafson 2009; Lazar 2008; Postero 2007) and respective regional perspectives (Brysk 2000; Van Cott 2008; Yashar 2005), while also adapting views from several political scientists and social movement scholars on state-society relations in Bolivia and in Latin America (Prevost et al. 2012a; Stahler-Sholk et al. eds. 2008; Webber 2011, 2012).

Although there is a growing literature on indigeneity in world politics and political theory (Beier ed. 2009; Hobson 2012; Ryser 2012; Sassen 2008; Shaw 2008; Van Cott 2008; Yashar 2005), indigenous political alternatives and movement struggles still occupy marginal roles within these disciplinary orientations. Even though political scientists and social movement scholars on Latin America have been instrumental in highlighting the importance of indigenous movements as political forces amidst increasing resistance to economic globalization (Dangl 2007, 2010; Eckstein ed. 2001[1989]; Petras and Veltmeyer 2005; Stahler-Sholk et al. eds. 2008), and as being associated with the rise of the so-called new Left (Arditi 2008; Cameron and Silva 2009; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Madrid 2008; Weyland et al. eds. 2010; Webber and Carr eds. 2013a), there are surprisingly few studies on what indigeneity, or indigenous terminologies, actually mean. There is also a paucity of research on how they translate into real-life political alternatives and the policy practices of states in countries such as Bolivia, where such notions as *vivir bien* have become key to understanding contemporary processes of change. Even though this ‘ethno-cultural agenda’ has been identified as one of the most important and central aspects in the success of Morales’s regime (Morales 2013: 77), its empirical meanings, interpretations and practices by people who employ and translate those concepts have, nevertheless, not been systematically examined within the state realm. Yet to me this terminology crystallizes all that indigenous movements are opting for in terms of political change. Even within literary and philosophical strands of postcolonial critique, where there is great interest in indigenous terminologies as alternative knowledge orientations and epistemologies (Escobar 2010a; Mignolo and Escobar eds. 2010; Moraña et al. eds. 2008; Quijano 2005), analysis of their practical translations into empirical settings has equally been largely missing.

In the discipline of social anthropology, which has been constructed on the critical examination of ‘the cultural’, questions of ethnicity, indigeneity, local traditions and

their various meanings and interpretations, have been at the core of academic scrutiny. There is a well-established, long-term tradition of research on cosmological principles, ritual practices, identity formation and social organization of indigenous communities within the Andean anthropology (Allen 1988; Arnold ed. 1997; Bastien 1978; Bouyesse-Cassagne et al. 1987; Girault 1988; Harris 2000; Isbell 1985; LaBarre 1948; Platt 1982; Rösing 1996; Spedding 1994; Urton 1981). Additionally, the influence of some historians in shaping the understandings of the 'Andean culture' has been paramount (Spalding 1984; Murra 1978, 2002[1956]; Zuidema 1964). While anthropological and historical examination of the lives and customs of lowlands indigenous groups has been less encompassing, works of such authors as Melià (1988), Riester (1985a) and Saignes (1990) still serve as valid references for understanding lowlands communities and their cosmologies.

More recent anthropological research on indigenous peoples in Bolivia has tended to focus in one way or another on the politics of indigeneity amidst global processes (Albro 2006; Fabricant 2012; Goldstein 2004; Goodale 2009; Gustafson 2009; Lazar 2008; McNeish 2010; Postero 2007, 2013; Salman 2007). What have often been lacking in anthropological scrutiny of indigeneity, however, are linkages between indigeneity, state formation processes and the wider global political economy. In this study, I am committed to Tsing's (2007) idea that nation-states do matter to indigenous causes. The importance of the state as a field of study is especially relevant in contemporary Bolivia where indigenous peoples have been able to become involved at the centers of state transformation and policy making. Although probably marginalized within the mainstream social anthropology, anthropological research on policy (Shore and Wright 1997), the state (Das and Poole 2004; Sharma and Gupta eds. 2006a; Trouillot 2003) and development (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Mosse 2005) offers valuable methodological, conceptual and theoretical tools for addressing the articulations between global, national and local dimensions of indigeneity.

This study lauds multidisciplinarity. As an ethnographic endeavor, it differs from the work of fellow anthropologists in that rather than concentrating on local indigenous communities or impoverished urban neighborhoods, it focuses on the discourses and practices of new state actors in the corridors of power, in state institutions, and in the contested sphere of policy making. Here the historically constructed bureaucratic power relations and forms of rule, as well as the influence of various global processes such as economic globalization and international development policy making, become key concerns in analysis. Consequently, research and analysis has combined methodologies used by social anthropologists in order to study political phenomena – traditionally the realm of political scientists, political sociologists or social movement scholars. In comparison to many political scientists and social movement scholars, however, analysis here places more emphasis on the importance of indigeneity and people's own

terminologies, experiences and voices. A multidisciplinary approach is needed to place movement struggles in their diverse and complex historical framings and to relate the empirical messiness of Bolivian politics to larger structural and institutional frameworks of state formation and global processes. The goal is to unveil the multiple and intricate ways in which power works – is articulated and contested – not solely between the governing regime and its political opposition but also within the MAS, within the state bureaucracy, and between and within local social movements.

Development studies offer a platform for multidisciplinary endeavors that draw from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, scholarly orientations and normative standpoints. As an academic discipline it is, and needs to be, a platform for the critical examination and understanding of social change in our global world. Amidst persistent inequalities and poverty at global, national and local levels, there is an urgent demand for the examination of critical political alternatives and perceptions of new kinds of ‘development’, or social change, which are emerging in the Global South in response to – and often opposed to – the global capitalist political economy. The examination of the notion of *vivir bien* in contemporary Bolivian state transformation process pretends to make a contribution to this end.

The following pages describe and explain an ethnographic understanding of what the politics of indigeneity in Evo Morales’ Bolivia is all about. I invite readers to take part in this journey.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Bolivia has quickly become one of the loudest worldwide critics of economic globalization and the spread of universal policy ideas through economic conditionalities and development aid. Together with the late Hugo Chávez from Venezuela and Rafael Correa from Ecuador, Evo Morales, a former union leader and movement activist of Aymara origin, has become one of the leading Latin American proponents of anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist agendas. Within global indigenous movements, the rise of Bolivian social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions to political power through the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) has raised high hopes for indigenous liberation elsewhere. Until quite recently, however, Bolivia had been celebrated by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and international development agencies as a model student of neoliberal restructurings of economy and state (Eyben 2004; Kohl and Farthing 2006; Morales 2012). Under the rubric of the Washington Consensus policies<sup>1</sup>, it was one of the first countries in the world to adopt structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and to experiment with their respective social emergency funds (Grindle 2003). Its experimentations with participatory decentralization processes and poverty reduction policies were also perceived as exemplary cases and were soon replicated in other countries of the Global South (Booth and Piron 2004; Molenaers and Renard 2002; Montambeault 2008). Bolivia's relationships with IFIs and international development agencies were celebrated as prime examples of harmonious policy dialogue (Eyben 2004; Eyben and León 2005). Given the contradictions between the present and recent past, we are faced with putting contemporary attempts to formulate an endogenous development discourse, and a model for social change on the basis of the politics of indigeneity, at the center of our scrutiny.

It has been argued that “the breakdown of the Washington Consensus began when the promises that these policies would lead to better social and economic indicators for the [Latin American] region's poor majority were not realized” (Prevost et al. 2012b: 4). According to the ECLAC, investments in the social sector declined and poverty increased all over Latin America during the period of the SAPs. Although poverty diminished during the early 1990s in most countries, 39 percent of the population in the region

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1 The so-called Washington Consensus principles, promoted by Washington, D.C.-based IFIs, the US government and various economists include such free market principles as fiscal discipline, lowering of public expenditure, tax reform, financial and trade liberalization, an increase in foreign direct investments, privatization of state enterprises, abolition of regulative barriers, and guarantees of property rights (Williamson 1993: 1329).

continued to live in poverty and 18 percent in extreme poverty. (Panizza 2009: 130–1.) One of the regions in the world with the greatest income disparity – where the richest tenth of the population receives between 40 and 47 percent of total income and the poorest fifth some 2–4 percent – inequalities expanded rather than diminished in most Latin American countries during the 1980s and the 1990s (de Ferranti et al. 2004: 2–3).

In Bolivia, the implementation of the SAPs led to the closure of mines, the opening of the country to foreign investments and transnational corporations, and the acceleration of the privatization of state enterprises and services with the consequent disappearance of tens of thousands of jobs; these were all factors contributing to growing income inequalities, unemployment and social problems (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 61–2, 71). The growth of foreign investment did not create employment or provide economic wellbeing for a large sector of the population (Hylton and Thomson 2007: 100). The informal sector, including the production of coca and cocaine, expanded rapidly as an alternative mode of income generation (Arce 2000: 44). By increasingly intruding onto indigenous lands and territories, transnational oil industries, logging companies, cattle ranchers, and the expansion of mono-crop cultivation and agribusiness, especially soya, were increasingly threatening traditional indigenous ways of life and financial subsistence (Crabtree 2005: 53–62; Yashar 2005: 195). By the turn of the new millennium, more than 63 percent of the Bolivian population was considered poor (Millennium Development Goals 2002; República de Bolivia 2001). Poverty was concentrated in rural areas and the High Plateau (*Altiplano*); areas that are mainly populated by indigenous peoples. A World Bank study estimated that 52 percent of indigenous peoples lived in extreme poverty and showed that while, in general, poverty had been decreasing between 1997 and 2002, the poverty gap between non-indigenous and indigenous peoples had become even wider (Hall and Patrinos 2005).

While indigenous uprisings and rebellions have played a major role in the contentious state-society relations throughout Bolivian history, it was not until the mid and late 1990s that indigenous movements started to become major actors in Bolivian politics. Resistance to economic globalization and the increasing power of IFIs, development agencies, and transnational companies have been considered major explanatory factors in the rise of new identity-based social movements, such as those based on indigeneity (Escobar and Alvarez eds. 1992a; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007; Vanden 2007). Combining an indigenous cause with increasing anti-globalization sentiments, the MAS evolved rapidly from a popular protest movement comprising social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions into the governing political instrument (Albó 2008; Van Cott 2008). In 2006, the control of the executive and legislative powers was shifted from liberal and conservative political parties to the hands of movement activists, indigenous actors, and union leaders (Tapia 2007). Without exaggeration it can be argued that indigenous peoples and social movements have never before been so at the center of the state as they currently are in Bolivia.

To make the Bolivian state work for indigenous peoples appears as a justified – yet highly contested – process, given their majority in the country and their disadvantaged position in terms of economic, political, and social affairs. Recognized by the new constitution (2009), Bolivia's thirty-six indigenous nationalities, including the Quechua (31 percent), the Aymara (25.23 percent), and minor groups such as the Guaraní, Chiquitano, Mojeño, and others (6.10 percent), make up approximately 63 percent of the total Bolivian population (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2004: 104). The Aymara and the Quechua groups reside in the Andean mountain regions – the first in the Andean high plateau and the second in the valleys – and comprise various internally heterogeneous groups. The Guaraní and other minority groups reside in the Bolivian lowlands which consist of the regions of Chaco, Santa Cruz, and the Amazon (Yashar 2005: 190–1; see also, Appendix 1).

Although, for the sake of analytical clarity, I tend to use the generic term 'indigenous people' in this study, it is acknowledged here that the concept itself is much contested. In Bolivia, indigenous peoples are divided into distinct categories both in national imaginaries and in their self-representation. The new constitution, for example, uses the term *indígenas-originarios-campesinos* (República de Bolivia 2008a; see also, Albó and Romero 2008: 4). Differences and multiple definitions within and between distinct indigenous groups derive from their multiple histories and relations with the Bolivian nation-state and global processes. In a nutshell, the notion of indigenous peoples (*indígenas*), which is the term used by international conventions on indigenous rights, refers, first and foremost, to those minority groups that reside in the Bolivian lowlands such as Santa Cruz, Chaco, and the Amazon regions; indigenous peoples in these regions tend to self-identify themselves as *indígenas* (Postero 2007). The Aymara and the Quechua, who reside in, or have ties to, *ayullus* – traditional self-governing units of indigenous communities in specific lands and territories – in the highlands, rather prefer to define themselves as natives, or *originarios*, a term coined by the colonial Spanish Crown to refer to original male members of *comunidades originarias* (Klein 2003: 48). As a result of the 1952 nationalist revolution, many also tend to categorize themselves on the basis of their class position as peasants (*campesinos*) (Albó 2008; Postero 2007). In comparison to Andean countries such as Peru or Ecuador, this three-way division within and between indigenous peoples is specific to the Bolivian context (on the comparative Andean perspective see, for example, Albó 2008; Yashar 2005).

Although the use of endogenous development terminologies, such as *ujamaa* in Tanzania, *harambee* in Kenya, Buddhist ideas in Bhutan and Gandhian ideas in India, has, to some extent, been common among postcolonial governments in Africa and Asia, the emergence of indigeneity as a source of alternative development ideas is a more recent phenomenon. Although indigenous policy reforms have been common since the 1990s in Bolivia (Albó 2008; Gustafson 2009; Kohl and Farthing 2006; Postero 2007; Zoomers



2006) and elsewhere (Hale 2002; Li 2007; Tsing 2005; Walsh 2010), indigenous ideas have rarely become overarching policy principles for the state. In contemporary Bolivia, however, the notion of good life (*vivir bien* [living well] in Spanish, *suma qamaña* in Aymara, *sumaq kawsay* in Quechua) has been employed since 2006 as the guiding policy principle of the National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Bolivia digna, soberana, productiva, y democrática para Vivir Bien*); the main policy framework for this study. Drawing on indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews, the notion of good life is portrayed as a local alternative to global development ideas spread by IFIs, development agencies, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Although I am aware that the term ‘good life’ is not a perfect translation into English from Spanish or various indigenous terminologies, I have chosen to use it systematically throughout the study for the sake of ease and coherent expression. In doing this, I follow scholars such as Gudynas (2011a), meanwhile explaining the more elaborate meanings of the terminology in each of the empirical chapters.

Despite the emphasis on the ‘local’, the promotion of indigenous notions has, however, been intimately shaped and enhanced by global indigenous discourses, lobbying, and policy work on indigenous rights and self-determination both in the spheres of transnational organizations and across global indigenous networks (Brysk 2000; Tsing 2007; Yashar 2005). At the regional level, the rise of Bolivian social movements can be associated with the electoral success of various left and center-left parties starting with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998 and followed by Lula Inácio da Silva in Brazil in 2002, as well as other left-wing candidates in Uruguay, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile (Prevost et al. eds. 2012a). Webber and Carr (2013b: 5–6) situate Bolivia within the category of the radical Left in distinction to more moderate and reformist center-left countries in the region, given a party and regime modality that aims at tackling capitalist productive relations through a human-centered development model, and espouses communal ownership of economic and natural resources, democratization in all spheres of life, and anti-imperialist policies. What further separates Bolivia from many other Latin American countries in which the recent rise of the political Left has been prevalent is the extent to which new political landscapes are being defined and shaped by indigenous terminologies. Together with a fellow Andean country, Ecuador, under the leadership of the left-wing President Correa (Becker 2013; Walsh 2008, 2010), Bolivia has brought indigenous policy ideas to the fore in the state transformation process (For comparison between indigenous political mobilizations within Andean countries, see Albó 2008; Van Cott 2005; Yashar 2005).

As a form of development critique, the notion of *vivir bien* is also linked to Latin American postcolonial critique as a regional provider of theoretical and political alternatives (Mignolo 2005; Moraña et al. eds. 2008; Quijano 2000; Walsh et al. eds. 2006). The emergence of alternative policy ideas is part of the regional trend of many Latin American

social movements and indigenous organizations to search for political alternatives that counteract *both* economic globalization *and* the ‘coloniality’ of epistemologies and knowledge claims (Blaser 2007; Escobar 2010a). Therefore, an analysis that remains solely at the level of economic exploitation is not sufficient but needs to be complemented with attention to such issues as indigeneity, ethnicity, and diverse knowledge orientations; that is, power relations in a wider perspective.

The *vivir bien* policy framework is coupled with the new perception of the state. State discourses emphasize such contested notions as the ‘refounding’ (*refundación*) and ‘decolonization’ (*descolonización*) of the state. Decolonization here refers to a process which aims to abolish historically and globally constructed economic and social inequalities manifested most specifically in the lives of indigenous peoples (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 106–7). Ideally, it addresses both external dependencies and internal hierarchies. Through ‘epistemic and cultural decolonization’ (Escobar 2010a), social movements and indigenous organizations try to narrow down existing global asymmetries of power and their ‘racialized’ hierarchies within nation-states. As a tool for changing those economic, political, and social relations that reproduce racial social classifications, the notion of decolonization has highly democratizing potential (Quijano 2000). In the process of decolonization, indigenous policy ideas serve as the ideological basis for the construction of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (*Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia*) (República de Bolivia 2008a). According to the Vice-President García Linera, the aim of constructing the plurinational state is to “allow dominated and excluded ethnic groups to have their share of social recognition and structures of political power” (2007: 66 [my translation]). The plurinational state, therefore, refers to a decolonized and decentralized state that comprises a conglomeration of various *naciones* (nations), autonomous indigenous territories, municipalities, and regions (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 485). As an antithesis of liberal nation-state principles and global development policy ideas, this implies a major transformation of the state, that is, its refoundation: a new beginning, rather than moderate reforms.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Bolivia is a nation of notable diversities and stark contradictions including geographical conditions that range between the arid, rugged Andean highlands and the humid, luscious savannas and tropics of the Bolivian lowlands; a population consisting of an indigenous majority divided into more than thirty ethnic nationalities with major local and regional distinctions; and socio-economic conditions built on inequalities, poverty, and ethnic disparities. It is not, therefore, an unlikely candidate for radical transformation. Since its independence from Spanish rule in 1825, it has been subjected to a dramatic number of

coups, revolts, and revolutions (Dunkerley 1984). Although the thesis that all societies constantly change is intimately inscribed in the development of social sciences, one may well wonder whether there is more explanatory power in Bolivia's extraordinary political instability than merely illustrating the 'natural' tendency of all societies to evolve. Indeed, while discussing Bolivia's political history, Dunkerley has asked the following set of provocative questions: "If disorder is so prevalent, might it not be order itself? Could there not be a system in the chaos? Should it not be understood less as interruption than continuity?" (1984: XI).

Given the turbulent and intimately intertwined past and today, this section will briefly shed light on the history of the Bolivian state formation by looking at the complex connections between global, national, and local processes. This will provide background for analysis of contemporary phenomena. The starting point here is that the history of the Bolivian nation-state can be described through two continuities: exploitative external dependency relations, and contentious state-society relations. Together these historical factors have created and constantly re-produced the marginalization of the country's diverse indigenous populations. More detailed historical contextualizations will be found in each of the empirical chapters of this study. Parts of Chapter Four deal more specifically with indigenous histories.

### **1.1.1 Colonial Governance and Economic Exploitation**

The Bolivian nation-state came into existence as a colonial construction. The Spanish conquest of the Inca state of *Tawantinsuyo* (1438–1533) led into the establishment of the Vice-Royalty of Peru from which expeditions to the Bolivian highlands immediately set out (Klein 2003). As with other colonies in the New World, Bolivia was built to benefit the Spanish conquistadors as a new market area and via economic exploitation of natural resources, mainly minerals such as silver and later tin, as well as land (*ibid.*). In this historical setting, characterized by "an excess of surplus transfers to the core of the world economy" (Webber and Carr 2013b: 10), lies the roots of the peripheral, and dependent, position that many Latin American countries still occupy in the capitalist world economy. Rather than ensuring the well-being of local (indigenous) populations, the building of elite-led administrative bureaucracies and institutional structures that later came to represent the governing structures of the Bolivian state supported the Spanish imperial structure and the early birth of a capitalist economy. Nash has described this ironically by stating that "the Spaniards took enough silver from [Bolivia's] mines to build a transatlantic bridge to Madrid, but left nothing in the mining centers from which these riches came except the mint in Potosí and a few religious relics" (1993: 1).

External conquest was paralleled with the construction of so-called 'internal

colonialism'. This term, launched in Latin America by Pablo Gonzáles Casanova (1965) and popular among Bolivian and Latin American social scientists, has been used by dependency scholars such as André Gunder Frank (1967) to explain regional inequalities within countries that are seen to have resulted from the unevenness of capitalist development and state interventions. In the case of Bolivia, the term has often involved an ethnic dimension. It has been used to explain economic and social inequalities that rose in specific areas and territories as a result of ethnic and racial domination of one group by another (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 106–7). Although indigenous populations were in theory entitled to royal protection on the basis of their “inferiority”, their relationships with colonial rule were, at heart, exploitative (Postero 2007: 28). Indigenous peoples in the Andean highlands were drawn into a system of forced labor at the mines and later at large estate haciendas that complemented the mining system (ibid.). This was partly justified through a racial discourse of purity of blood, a *sistema de castas* that originated in Spanish cultural traditions and was for three centuries an institutionalized part of a colonial rule in Latin America that ranked whites at the top with pure blood, followed by mixed race people in the middle, with indigenes and blacks filling the lowest echelons (Martínez-Alier 1989). Exploitation occurred at multiple levels as Postero has noted: “Exploitative economic practices were enabled by the juridical definitions and, in turn, reinforced the resulting discursive racial categories, naturalizing particular forms of domination” (2007: 29).

In terms of Latin American colonial-state organization, Vanden and Prevost (2012: 38–9) have written in the following way:

Political power was highly concentrated in colonial governmental structures... The colonial elite that emerged amassed considerable wealth and power... The Viceroy was... the King's representative and could truly rule. Executive, military, and some legislative powers were combined in such a way as to establish the cultural model of the all-powerful executive that has permeated Latin American political... culture to the present day.

Economic elites used the colonial state both to the advantage of the Spanish Crown and for their own personal gain by intervening directly in political affairs to advance their own economic interests (Klein 2003). Herein lie the origins of political and bureaucratic clientelism and patronage, common in Latin America even today, in which the elite in public office tied their personal economic interests and networks to that of the nation (Dezalay and Garth 2002: 23). A practice that originated in large estate haciendas as a relationship between the *patrón* and his (indigenous) laborers, Vanden and Prevost have defined the patron-client relationship as “the special ties of personal loyalty and commitment that connect a powerful person with those below him” (2012: 198).

The influence of the French Revolution, the collapse of the imperial government in Madrid under Napoleon's armies, and the independence of the United States and Haiti

in the western hemisphere spurred a wave of decolonization across Latin America (Klein 2003). The early independence of many Latin American countries makes contemporary discourses of decolonization different from those in Africa and Asia, where processes of decolonization and the construction of postcolonial states have been more recent phenomena (Slater 1998: 653). Although the first declaration of independence in Latin America took place in La Paz (the capital of Bolivia), Bolivia was paradoxically the last Latin American country to gain independence.

Internally, the nineteenth-century republican era was a period of political anarchy because of military and civil *caudillismo*, which effectively enhanced authoritarian political rule and an unstable political environment all over Latin America for the decades, if not the century, to come (Valtonen 2001: 522–6). *Caudillos*, the archetypical charismatic leaders not unknown in present day Latin America, were strong, dictatorial rulers at either local, regional or national levels (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 184). The fact that the president and the executive were assigned major political power in the constitution, added to the limited number of the population with political rights (wealthy men), led to continuous political battles and coups within the relatively narrow elite (Foweraker et al. 2003: 13). In terms of state formation, the liberal phase, which lasted from 1899 until the 1930s, represents a period of *laissez-faire* state organization during which “the feeble state was nothing more than the repressive apparatus of the oligarchy” (Moore 1990: 33). While economic elites and tin barons withdrew from direct political decision-making, lawyers and politicians did continue to act in the interests of the extremely narrow, trade-oriented, capitalist elite. By the end of the 1920s, 90 percent of the tin mines, the main foreign export at the time, were owned by three Bolivian families (Valtonen 2001: 528). The relations between the elites and the rest of society continued to be based on internal colonialism in such ways that “internal colonial hierarchies reproduced colonial legacies of ethnic, economic and political domination and subordination” (Qayum 2002: 279). In response to the rapid liberalization of the economy, the creation of the mining export industry, and the massive expansion of the *hacienda* system, a wave of indigenous uprisings emerged. With the aim of (re-)gaining indigenous self-governing arrangements, these conflicts erupted periodically from the late-nineteenth century until the nationalist revolution in 1952 (see more in detail in 4.2).

### **1.1.2 The Nationalist Revolution and Co-Governing Arrangements**

From the 1930s onwards, political and economic landscapes changed all over Latin America. Firstly, the collapse of external trade as the result of the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression in the US and Europe turned Latin American economies

inwards, augmenting the role of the state and the strategy of import substitution industrialization (ISI). Secondly, the collapse of external trade weakened the role of trade-oriented economic elites, thereby opening political spaces for new actors. (Foweraker et al. 2003: 16.) In Bolivia, the Chaco War (1932–1935) against Paraguay over vast south-west territories that were believed to contain large oil reserves combined the middle class, workers, and indigenous peoples who, for the first time, had been intimately drawn into national affairs (Valtonen 2001: 529). After the war, former forced laborers refused to go back to *haciendas*, formed the first peasant unions, and started to fight for the ownership of lands, especially in Cochabamba areas (Albó 2008: 27). The earliest sign of the emergence of new kinds of politics was the nationalization of the US-owned Standard Oil Company in 1937. It was believed that foreign oil capital and the economic interests of the elites had sparked the Chaco War. (Moore 1990: 33.)

Inspired by the Mexican revolution, the emergence of a new nationalist ideology culminated in the 1952 Bolivian nationalist revolution. A massive process of nation-state building was kicked off: universal suffrage and education were initiated; the mining sector nationalized; and agrarian reform launched (1953) (Grindle 2003; Morales 2012). Relying on state-led growth and public investments, the Bolivian nation-state strived to be a strong and centralized agent of planning and control of strategic economic sectors, labor, and development initiatives: the *desarrollista* state (Morales 2003; Webber 2011: 67–8). This followed regional trends promoted by *cepalistas* and other dependency scholars throughout Latin America (Foweraker et al. 2003: 16). Despite US resistance, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA; later on ECLAC with the Caribbean added; CEPAL in Spanish) started to recommend an import-substituting economy as the Latin American regional economic policy from the 1950s. It was based on the so-called Prebisch-Singer thesis which argued that trade relations between industrialized and developing countries were becoming disadvantageous for the latter over time, due to their concentration on exports of primary commodities (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 160). The solution was to enhance national industrial processes, to lessen imports from abroad, and to increase the regulatory role of the state in economic affairs (Furtado 1970). However, in comparison to other Latin American countries, Bolivia maintained a heavy reliance on the exploitation of natural resources, with only minor changes in industrialization and import tariffs (Morales 2003: 216).

The main agent of the nationalist revolution was the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR), a political party comprising members of the middle class, under the leadership of mid-range military personnel. The most fundamental feature of the nationalist revolution, however, was what the Bolivian historian René Zavaleta (2008 [1986]) has called the formation of the ‘national-popular’ or the ‘hegemony of the masses’, an alliance, or co-governing arrangements, between the emerging national bourgeoisie and the popular classes, including workers, miners,

and peasants. This resulted in long-term histories of corporatist state-building and political clientelism (Gray Molina 2003: 350). In the early 1950s, the MNR supported the creation of the Bolivian Workers' Union (*Central Obrero Boliviano*, COB) in which miners' unions that co-governed the nationalized mines through the *Corporación Minera de Bolivia* (COMIBOL) played a major role (Klein 2003: 213–4). Following US foreign policy interests in Latin America (Webber and Carr 2013b: 13), the MNR had also supported the organization of indigenous communities into state-sponsored peasant unions in order to avoid radical communist mobilizations. In the name of unifying the nation, the state strived to assimilate indigenous peoples into the comprehensive national project via universal suffrage, education, and land reform, as well as by identifying them through their class position as peasants rather than as indigenous people (Albó 2008). This has resulted in what Postero has called the “continuing ambiguity between class and ethnicity” (2007: 11), visible in state politics and indigenous discourses even today. In 1979 and 1980, the two main peasant unions active in the contemporary process of change were finally founded as independent of state interference: the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB) and its women's branch, the *Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia “Bartolina Sisa”* (FNMCB-BS) (García Linera et al. 2008).

Despite the nationalist revolution and the ISI policy, Bolivia's external dependency in the form of trade and aid remained strong. The first US development programs in Latin America had been piloted in Bolivia; during the 1950s, it became the largest recipient of US development aid in Latin America and the highest per capita in the world; by 1958, one-third of Bolivia's national budget was financed directly by US funds (Klein 2003: 218). The US crusade against communism led them to lavishly support the MNR in order to lessen the importance and influence of more radical left-wing components of the co-governing arrangement. In turn, the US demanded full support for the operations of US (oil) companies in the country and, under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it also dictated new fiscal policy to Bolivia (Klein 2003: 219–221). The so-called ‘Triangular Plan’, which was supported by the US, West-Germany and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), was elaborated to enhance the state mining sector, thus giving a boost to the emergence of new (state) economic elites (Moore 1990: 37). Over the course of military dictatorships, the US were outraged by the 1969 nationalization of US-owned Gulf Oil by General Ovando, while open-handedly subsidizing ideologically suitable dictators such as Hugo Banzer, who promoted direct US investments and was heavily supported by the Bolivian industrial sectors, especially in the lowlands. By financing 20 to 30 percent of yearly budget deficits, the US helped likeminded dictators to hold on to power. (Moore 1990: 39, 41.) The notable role of the US in Bolivian political and economic affairs is a clear demonstration of the continuation of neocolonial relations and dependencies between Bolivia and other countries.



### 1.1.3 Economic Globalization and the Universalism of Development Ideas

From the mid-1980s, Bolivian political and economic landscapes again changed drastically, shifting from decades of military dictatorships and repressive governments to representative democracy and party politics, accompanied by an opening of its markets to free trade and economic globalization. Both were important regional trends resulting from the 1982 debt crisis which effectively brought an end to both military dictatorships and state-led development planning in Latin America (Dezalay and Garth 2002; Foweraker et al. 2003: 27–30; Panizza 2009).<sup>2</sup> In global terms, Latin American regional economic trends coincided with the crisis of Keynesian economics in Europe and the US and the respective rise of conservative governments of Thatcher and Reagan which had a strong impact on their foreign aid policy (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 169). Furthermore, the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union helped generate the ethos that there were no alternative ideologies to market liberalism (ibid.).

Bolivia served (again) as an experimental ground for international economic and development policies, being one of the first countries in the world to adopt SAPs (Grindle 2003). The SAPs were economic and financial reform packages that were required to be implemented by heavily indebted countries in order to qualify for loans from IFIs (Boås and McNeill 2003; Fforde 2009; Riddell 2007). In response to hyperinflation<sup>3</sup>, a dramatic collapse of the world market price of tin (Bolivia's main export at the time), and to a piling up of foreign debt that Bolivia was increasingly unable to manage, the newly elected MNR government came up with the framework for the New Economic Policy (*Decreto* 21060) in 1985 (Klein 2003: 244–6; Kohl and Farthing 2006: 65–70). From the mid-1990s, the NEP policy, which had focused on macroeconomic stabilization, a decrease in inflation rates and cutting down governmental expenditure, was further enhanced with an accelerating pace in privatizations of the largest state-owned companies by transnational corporations (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 107–8). The privatizations, inscribed in the new legislation *Ley de Capitalización* and forcefully demanded by the IFIs, the US and other development donors, touched upon such important sectors as oil and natural gas (Bolivia's main export at the time), telecommunications, electricity, airlines, and railroads (ibid.: 108–9).<sup>4</sup> Bolivia shifted rapidly from being one of the most

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2 Chile was an early exception with the alliance between the military regime of General Pinochet and 'neoliberal' economists and technocrats called the 'Chicago Boys' (for more on the case of Chile, see, for example, Dezalay and Garth 2002; Leiva 2013).

3 The main causes of hyperinflation were the withdrawal of international lenders and the parallel increase in international interest rates which impacted, for example, on tax returns. From 1984 to 1985, prices rose by 20,000 percent. During the last peak months, the hyperinflation rushed to an annualized rate of 60,000 percent. (Sachs 1987: 278–90.)

4 Despite foreign pressure, Paz Estenssoro's government (1985–1989) had resisted the privatization of the largest and most strategic state-owned companies. The Paz Zamora government (1989–1993), for its



nationalized economies in the region to being one of the most liberalized ones (Crabtree 2005: 18).

Opening the national economy to globalization and the introduction of universal development ideas radically changed the nature of the Bolivian state. In the post-Cold War ideological environment, it was perceived that the “tension between left and right [was] replaced by a tension between the global and the local, and between the market and civil society” (Boås and McNeill 2003: 156). Consequently, one of the fundamental features of neoliberal governance promoted through policy reforms was the diminishing role of the state in economic and social spheres *vis-à-vis* global and local actors. The aim was to create a minimally regulated economy open to foreign investment, and a minimal role for the state combined with the new conception of a pro-active, multicultural citizenship (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 84). Although the Bolivian case resembled orthodox Washington Consensus principles in many ways, the wave of privatizations was complemented by multicultural reforms (discussed more in detail in Chapter Four).

After Bolivia submitted to loan conditionalities, IFIs and international development agencies were eager to support both Bolivian privatization schemes and social programs. During the years 1994–1998, the World Bank supported the privatization process to the tune of US \$357 million in credits directed at institutional, economic, municipal, educational, and social reforms. European bilateral development agencies heavily supported such issues as decentralization, and indigenous and gender affairs, while the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) financed judicial and regulatory reforms. (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 86–7.) In 1999, Bolivia ranked twelfth in per-capita aid recipients in the world (Klein 2003: 250). By 2000, Bolivia had become highly dependent on, and indebted to, multilateral and bilateral development actors (Mollinedo and Velasco 2006). This significantly increased their role in Bolivian economic and development policy-making through loan and debt relief conditionalities. The influence of foreign development actors in dictating policy became so powerful in Bolivia, as in many other aid-dependent countries, that it has been argued that it was “virtually impossible...to choose any other path of national development” (Foweraker et al. 2003: 28).

In 2001, Bolivia was also one of the first countries to undertake the steps outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), required by the World Bank and the IMF for debt relief within the Highly Indebted Poor Countries program (HIPC) (Booth and Piron 2004; Morrison and Singer 2007; Molenaers and Renard 2002).<sup>5</sup> Craig and

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part, enhanced the privatization of smaller state-owned companies, nearly thirty of which were purchased by mainly Bolivian investors. (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 107.)

5 HIPC is a World Bank and IMF-led initiative, started in 1996, whose aim is to cancel the international debts of the poorest countries of the Global South (International Monetary Fund 2014). About HIPC in Bolivia, see Mollinedo and Velasco (2006).

Porter (2006) locate the emergence of the so-called ‘Post-Washington Consensus’ in the financial crisis of the late 1990s, especially that of the Asian Tigers. In comparison to highly criticized SAPs, PRSPs emphasized civil society participation and national ownership, and made an explicit link between macroeconomic adjustment, debt relief and poverty reduction (ibid.: 77–8). Nevertheless, they have been criticized for their macroeconomic and political conditionalities, for increasing the influence of IFIs over the internal issues of sovereign states, and, despite their rhetoric of participation and ownership, for ignoring specific political, economic, social, and cultural contexts (Gould 2005; Peet 2003; Steward and Wang 2003). It has, therefore, been argued that “the Post-Washington Consensus is better characterized as a modified or updated version of the Washington Consensus rather than as its abandonment” (Jomo and Fine 2006: 3). In the case of Bolivia, I have made similar claims (Ranta-Owusu 2008), while Gould and Ojanen (2003) have argued that the PRSPs still rely on the assumption that privatization, trade liberalization, and economic deregulation will result in poverty reduction.

The launching of the *Estrategia Boliviana de Reducción de la Pobreza* (EBRP) was preceded by a massive *Diálogo Nacional* consultation process with municipalities and NGOs within the institutional framework of decentralization and the Popular Participation Law (1994) (Booth and Piron 2004: VIII). Despite discourses of participation and ownership, it has been argued that “the PRSP ended up being written...by people who did not participate in the Dialogue” (Komives et al. 2003; quoted in Morrison and Singer 2007: 272). As PRSPs became conditionalities for obtaining any concessional assistance all over the Global South (Morrison and Singer 2007: 722), the World Bank and the IMF clearly called the shots in their elaboration. Critical civil society actors, such as the COB and other trade unions, and indigenous political parties such as the *Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti* (MIP)<sup>6</sup> of the Andean highlands Aymara, and the MAS of the coca-growers from the Chapare region, were marginalized from consultations (Booth and Piron 2004: 20; Molenaers and Renard 2002: 29).

### 1.1.4 Social Movements and Indigenous Organizations as Counterforce

While indigenous peoples have actively mobilized throughout Bolivia’s history, their political uprising intensified from the mid-1990s through both party politics and

6 The MIP was led by Felipe Quispe (“*El Mallku*”), a long-term union leader of the CSUTCB and Aymara nationalist, whose political rhetoric emphasized indigenous cultural beliefs and the dream of a return of ancient indigenous civilizations. He also belonged to the *kataristas* described more in detail in Chapter Four. During the early 1990s, Quispe had been jailed for violent *guerrillero* actions (Albó 2008: 64–6; Kohl and Farthing 2006: 158; Van Cott 2005: 77–8; Yashar 2005: 221).

movement activism (Albó 2008; Van Cott 2008). The first initiatives emerged amidst the regional celebrations of 500 years of resistance to Spanish conquest in 1992 when the Assembly of First Nations was inaugurated (Healey 2009: 95). An additional regional spark for indigenous mobilizations was enhanced by the launching of the idea of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in 1994, which effectively brought the case of Zapatista indigenous resistance in the Mexican Chiapas to the attention of the world and, with time, was reflected in the election of left-wing governments into political power in many parts of Latin America (Prevost et al. 2012b: 3). Institutional reforms, such as the process of administrative decentralization, and constitutional reform in which the proportional representation system was complemented by a single member district system, opened up forums for indigenous participation through regionally-based political parties (Van Cott 2005: 70–1). The Assembly for the Sovereignty of Peoples (*Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos*, ASP) was founded in 1995 at the yearly meeting of the CSUTCB as the political instrument for the CSUTCB, *Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia* (CSCB) and the *Central Indígena de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano* (CIDOB) (ibid.: 69). The women's peasant union, FNMCB-BS also joined the peasant-indigenous political coalition (García Linera et al. 2008). In 1997, the ASP gained only 4 percent of national votes but, with massive regional support, it obtained six seats in parliament (Albro 2005: 440). Because of internal power struggles within the ASP, a group of Evo Morales' followers split off, founding the Instrument for the Sovereignty of Peoples (*Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos*, IPSP) in 1999. When the national electoral court (*Corte Nacional Electoral*, CNE) denied the IPSP the status of a political party, members adopted the legal registration of an old, non-functioning party, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) in order to participate in the national elections as MAS-IPSP (Van Cott 2008: 53).

The birth of the MAS as a political instrument initially served the interests of coca growing peasants; it has been argued that it was “a direct extension of their union movement” (Albro 2005: 439). The coca leaf had been cultivated in the Andes for centuries, if not longer. However, through global processes, it became a problem. Combined with the ongoing cocaine boom in the US and increasing migration from the Andean highlands to the valleys and lowlands due to legislative changes and better infrastructure introduced between the 1970s and the early 1980s (Healey 1986), the SAPs and the NEP policy further enhanced a process in which tens of thousands of unemployed Aymara and Quechua miners migrated to the Chapare region in search of a living (Sanabria 1993). Governmental ‘zero coca’ policies and outright militarization of the area as the result of the US ‘war on drugs’, resulted in years of violent conflicts between the army, the police, and coca growers’ unions (Crabtree 2005: 35–9). Approximately 200,000 people depended directly on coca growing activities and suffered from income losses because of the eradication policies executed by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

and because of the largely unsuccessful alternative development activities funded by the USAID (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 158). With the pressure from the US, the eradication of coca became a major conditionality for Washington Consensus loans and development aid (ibid.: 80). This came to be viewed as a major intrusion into Bolivia's internal affairs by local farmers, peasant unions and social movements, generating discourses of sovereignty among them (Arce 2000: 46).

Simultaneously, the founding of the peasant-indigenous political party was a reaction to so-called 'pacted democracy': "the creation of coalitions between different political parties to ensure a parliamentary majority for the government, to the detriment of the trade union organizations" (Urioste 2009: 107). Since the return to representative democracy in the mid-1990s, three major political parties – the MNR, the right-wing *Acción Democrática Nacional* (ADN), and the center-left *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) – collaborated in a political 'pact' in terms of sharing political power, political positions, and public sector jobs, while trade unions were deprived of their previously important role in co-governing arrangements (Grindle 2003: 337–8; Mayorga and Córdova 2008: 20–1)<sup>7</sup>. Party coalitions were needed in order to implement highly unpopular SAPs and other neoliberal conditionalities (ibid.). Salman (2007) has called this a process of 'democratic deconsolidation' whereby liberal and conservative political parties in favor of Washington Consensus policies co-opted state power for themselves. Many felt that political parties were just puppets serving the interests of IFIs, international development agencies, and transnational corporations. With the founding of their own political instruments, indigenous peoples and peasants demonstrated a deep distrust in party politics and a need for new forms of political representation (Van Cott 2003).

Two major mass mobilizations, or what Webber (2012) calls the 'left-indigenous insurrectionary cycle', paved the way for the further political rise of the MAS. The first was the Cochabamba Water War (2000) which originated in resistance to the privatization of the water and sanitary systems of Cochabamba, Bolivia's third largest city and located in an important agricultural valley. Under pressure from the World Bank, the Water Law awarded exclusive water distribution rights to a transnational company leading to sharp rises in water tariffs and confiscation of community water systems supplying small-scale, irrigation-dependent farmers and neighborhood organizations (Assies 2003; Kohl and Farthing 2006; Olivera 2004). The massive popular uprising that ensued comprised irrigation farmers, workers' unions, coca-growers, students, and even the Catholic Church and the urban middle class. The Gas War (2003) shifted contentious movements to El Alto, an impoverished and speedily growing city of rural Aymara migrants in the Andean

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7 Launched in 1985, the political pact between the MNR and ADN was called *Pacto por la Democracia*. From 1989 until 1993, there was a *Pacto Patriótico* between the MIR and ADN, while after that, the MNR adopted *Pacto por el Cambio* with its allies. (Grindle 2003: 337.)

highlands. The MNR government under President Sánchez de Lozada complied with the plan of allowing a transnational consortium to ship newly discovered Bolivian natural gas through Chilean harbors to the US in order to meet its energy needs (Crabtree 2005: 98). The vast majority of Bolivians opposed this, particularly as, for historical reasons, there was a strong hostility towards Chile.<sup>8</sup> Both wars symbolized the culmination of fatigue and anger with the influence of foreign economic and political interests and the strong role of transnational corporations and IFIs in national affairs. As such, conflicts and contestations were “a response to the perceived violation of Bolivia’s ‘national sovereignty’” (Albro 2005: 446).

In the 2004 municipal elections, the MAS made a political breakthrough by becoming the largest party, sweeping traditional political parties off the political map with each of them receiving less than five percent of the votes (Van Cott 2008: 54). The MIR and the MNR, the main pillars of Bolivian politics for at least two decades if not longer, almost disappeared from the political map overnight. This was preceded by the 2002 elections in which the MAS had already become the political opposition to be reckoned with. Evo Morales came a very close second in the presidential elections to mid-1990s neoliberal reformer Sánchez de Lozada (Albó 2008: 72). The MAS had expanded onto the national scene, taking advantage of the wide dissatisfaction with the traditional political parties and ever-growing conflicts and social protests (Van Cott 2008: 54). A new political grouping, *Poder Democrático Social* (PODEMOS), was created from the ruins of the ADN. It was led by US-educated technocrat Jorge Quiroga who had for a short period of time in the early 2000s served as president after the sudden death of Hugo Banzer. Since 2005, the PODEMOS became the main oppositional grouping to represent liberal and conservative sectors of the country, especially lowlands business elites, receiving more than 20 percent of the vote in the 2005 national elections (Van Cott 2008: 56). In the general elections of 2009 it was replaced by the center-left coalition party *Plan Progreso para Bolivia – Convergencia Nacional* (PPB-CN). The 2014 general elections have again sparked the emergence of new oppositional groupings.

In 2005, the major indigenous organizations and peasant unions mentioned above – the CSUTCB, FNMCB-BS, CSCB, CIDOB, and *Consejo de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ), an Andean indigenous organization founded in 1997 – signed a mutual cooperation agreement, *Unidad de Pacto* (Unity Pact), with other important social groups (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 159). The aim of the Unity Pact was to bring indigenous and peasant demands into a unifying national discourse: marginalized social

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8 The War of the Pacific (1879–1884) with Chile led to the loss of the Bolivian maritime connection. It has been portrayed as the first Bolivian resource war against geopolitical interests and economic imperialism of foreign nations (Morales 2012: 572–3). This still has enormous significance in Bolivian nationalist sentiments and diplomatic relations are still affected by it; political demands to retrieve coastal access emerge periodically.

movements would be better equipped to promote their political agendas as a common front. Established on the basis of the so-called *Estado Mayor del Pueblo*<sup>9</sup>, a coalition of almost twenty social movements and trade unions founded in the heat of the 2003 conflicts (Albó 2008: 73; Albro 2006: 414), the Unity Pact aimed to provide a common agenda for the elaboration of the Constituent Assembly and the nationalization of natural resources, issues that social movements were now pushing forward forcefully. Movements, organizations, and unions within the Unity Pact provided the most fundamental support during the presidential election of Evo Morales and the MAS in December 2005.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is an ethnographic study of the emergence of the notion of *vivir bien* as an indigenous development policy and political alternative in contemporary Bolivian state transformation process. Through the description and explanation of the governmental discourses and bureaucratic practices of *vivir bien*, it contributes to understanding how the state works in situations when policy and political discourses change drastically. The main focus is on the people who are involved with different levels of good life policy processes – political leaders (ministers, vice-ministers), consultants, public servants, indigenous activists, development experts – and what is said and done in the name of good life in contemporary Bolivian policy making. Consequently, I ask:

- 1) How is the notion of *vivir bien* constructed conceptually and discursively in indigenous politics and state policy?
- 2) How is the *vivir bien* policy translated into bureaucratic practice?
- 3) Cutting across both the above questions: what kind of power relations and contestations emerge in this process of state formation? This is a question to which I return throughout the discussion.

In respect to what is said in the name of good life, I examine how the notion of *vivir bien* is conceptually and discursively constructed into a conglomeration of indigenous ideas that is effectively translated into state policy. First of all, I study the history of the emergence of indigenous ideas and show how cultural and political ideas and discourses of indigenous peoples and movements are historically constructed through local, national, and global processes. Subsequently, I discuss the conceptual framing of the notion of *vivir bien* among contemporary social movements, indigenous activists and intellectuals who play a

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9 The list of social movements belonging to it can be found in the *Manifiesto del Estado Mayor del Pueblo Boliviano* (2003).

role in governmental policy discourses. Secondly, I examine contemporary governmental policy discourses through the description and analysis of policy documents and different actors' views. As the 'representation of the state' that makes the state discourse explicit (Sharma and Gupta 2006b), the National Development Plan (2007) offers the main policy reference. By following this course, my aim is to portray the multiple and complex processes through which the notion of good life is being constructed as the development policy discourse of the state.

In respect to what is done in the name of good life, I examine how *vivir bien* policy is translated into bureaucratic practice. Through ethnographic description of the operations by which new policy discourses are translated into bureaucratic practice, I describe and analyze the workings of the notion of *vivir bien* as a policy alternative. Concrete policy events and the everyday practices of consultants, public servants, and ministers are at the center of my analysis. Firstly, I examine the construction of bureaucratic practice and technical expertise through the analysis of specific policy events. Secondly, I focus on the experiences of public servants who are the main actors in the translation of policy into practice, thereby casting light on institutional and structural aspects of the Bolivian state bureaucracy. Thirdly, I examine contestations and power struggles within both the executive and social movements, as well as between the executive, political opposition, and social movements in the course of construction of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. The translation of policy is portrayed as an extremely challenging and contested practice. By concentrating on power relations and contentious politics, this study draws a picture of the multiple challenges and contradictions that different actors experience in this highly contested process of change.

Methodologically, I am following indigenous peoples and social movements to the centers of the state where many of them have become policy and decision-makers. Therefore, the methodological challenge is to grasp, ethnographically, this context of policy making and state formation, traditionally studied by political scientists and political sociologists. In line with this, my methodological research question is two-fold and underlies my approach to data throughout the study:

- 1) How may the bureaucratic context of the state in which new indigenous policy ideas circulate be grasped, ethnographically, by tracking the notion of *vivir bien*?
- 2) What comparative advantage does an ethnographic approach bring to the examination of policy making and state formation amidst processes of social change?

The final and, indeed, overarching research questions driving this study are theoretical, and are addressed throughout the text. Although global and local processes are crucial to indigenous experience, this study argues that the state is, and has increasingly become, an important reference point for indigenous peoples and social movements. The Bolivian



state is the object of transformation through the application of indigenous policy and the provision of political alternatives but it is also the subject through which changes are executed. Mosse has aptly encapsulated the goals of ethnographic research by stating that the “ethnographic question is not whether but how development...work[s]; not whether [it] succeeds, but how ‘success’ is produced” (2005: 8). Consequently, I do not ask whether social change (whether it is defined as the end of neoliberalism, the start of socialism, or the beginning of a new indigenous era) has been achieved, but rather describe and analyze:

- 1) How are discourses and practices of social change produced?
- 2) How does the state work in processes of change?
- 3) How do power and rule operate in the context of indigenous challenge to state formation?

These questions also have implications for the more normative question of the feasibility of the restructuring and transformation of a modern and, in many ways, globally-influenced nation-state on the basis of indigenous policy and political alternatives. Furthermore, in a normative sense this study could also be read as one that maps conditions for, and the challenges of, radical political projects that aim to counteract economic globalization and the spread of universal policy ideas through development aid.

### **1.3 DISSERTATION SYNOPSIS**

This study is divided into three parts, the first of which comprises the introduction, methodological orientations, and theoretical and conceptual framings. The introduction (Chapter One) frames the study by providing information about previous research, an introduction to the Bolivian case, broader historical background on state formation, and study objectives. Chapter Two introduces methodological orientations. I discuss why I find an ethnographic approach valid and necessary for understanding the contemporary Bolivian state transformation and explain how I gathered the data on which this dissertation rests. In Chapter Three I move into detailing theoretical and conceptual views that guide this dissertation, providing justification for choices made. It anchors scholarly discussions of indigeneity and social movements to notions of policy making, state formation and power.

The second part – which includes two chapters – describes and explains the conceptual and discursive construction of the notion of *vivir bien* as a state policy. It therefore addresses the first empirical research question concerning the concepts and discourses implemented in the current Bolivian state transformation process: what is said in the



name of good life. It is acknowledged here that the division between analysis that focuses on discourses and that which focuses on practices is artificial and that in empirical reality, discourses and practices are intimately intertwined in various complex ways. The division is made, however, in order to enhance analytical clarity.

Chapter Four begins with an exploration of indigenous terminologies, such as the notion of *suma qamaña*, an Aymara conception of good life. The production, distribution, and use of indigenous ideas, as well as their evolution into significant political and cultural discourses, are historically reconstructed; these ideas and discourses have travelled various intellectual and political paths – global and local – that I follow in the course of the chapter. I argue that through the enhancement of indigenous ideas on the basis of indigenous cultural difference, important political goals are promoted, most specifically those related to indigenous land ownership and territorial self-governance.

In Chapter Five I concentrate on the making of the notion of *vivir bien* into a unifying and overarching denominator for state policies. I argue that despite diverse and often conflictive political and ideological discourses emerging in the process of contemporary Bolivian state transformation, the notion of *vivir bien* is portrayed as a unifying policy and an alternative to both economic globalization and universal (Western) development paradigms.

The third part of this dissertation describes and explains the notion of *vivir bien* as contested practice in Bolivian state transformation. It focuses on the challenges that the notion of good life as a policy alternative faces in the midst of bureaucratic practice. In doing so its three chapters respond to the second empirical research question: how is the *vivir bien* policy translated into bureaucratic practice? In Chapter Six I examine the translation of indigenous policy ideas into bureaucratic practice and technical expertise. Through ethnographic observation, description and analysis of policy events, I argue that problems in ‘rendering technical’ have hampered the translation of the notion of good life into radically new governmental practice. Chapter Seven discusses institutional and structural characteristics of the Bolivian state and draws a picture of the state bureaucracy as a disciplinary power. It argues that the rupture that exists between decolonizing discourses and bureaucracy as a disciplinary power leads to a situation in which various forms of rule and power are enacted. Chapter Eight examines the idea that plurinationalism produces a battlefield for the struggle over (indigenous) ideas and resources. I argue that what is at stake in Bolivian state transformation is intimately linked to struggles over various forms of governance. The question of sovereignty brings together the examination of neoliberal governmentality, the nation-state, and indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, I present the results of this study and discuss its empirical, theoretical, methodological and normative significance.

## 2 FOLLOWING THE NOTION OF VIVIR BIEN

This chapter introduces the methodology of the study. My overall methodological argument is that a qualitative ethnographic approach may help to “decolonize” the scholarly examination of state formation and global processes by bringing to the fore unexpected local political alternatives that often reside outside Western scholarly and ideological paradigms. Academic knowledge production and expertise is part of global power relations that may – or may not – create, maintain, and deepen hierarchies and inequalities between the Global South and its northern counterpart. To take an example, political scientist Muppidi (2005) has suggested that both those who advocate scholarly approaches that can be perceived as comprising normative approval of increasing global governance, and those who reject them as imperialist, may – consciously or unconsciously – further the colonial order of knowledge production. This occurs because “the claims that both make...emerge from a colonial order...not because they invoke or reject imperialism explicitly but primarily because of a deeper silencing of the Other implicit in their discourses” (Muppidi 2005: 277).

Since the 1970s, it has been commonplace within anthropology to be aware of, and reflexive about, its colonial heritage and the dangers that scientific colonialism poses to the study of Otherness (Asad 1973; Ferguson 1997; Lewis 1973; Stocking 1991). Due to its ties to colonial governance, the discipline has been called the ‘daughter’ of imperialist violence that “made the larger part of the mankind subservient to the other” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 126). During the Cold War, anthropological deep descriptions were used in unethical ways for political, military and economic purposes (Wax 2008). Scholarly examination of indigenous peoples has been equally vulnerable to various forms of exploitation (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Combining this critical tradition to the need to follow indigenous peoples to such political arenas that have most often been examined theoretically rather than ethnographically, my claim is that ethnographic knowledge production has the potential of “decolonizing” the study of policy-making and state formation processes in two ways. First of all, as ethnography is usually based on long-term fieldwork among the people whom the researcher is examining, the point of departure is their lived realities and the local meanings that they attach to their own surroundings – often at the expense of the researcher’s own preconceptions, theoretical interests and Western scholarly paradigms. Secondly, an ethnographic approach makes the researcher’s own positionality visible through reflexivity; it illuminates the possible impacts of such issues as gender, class, ethnicity, or political views on data collection, methodological and

theoretical choices, and the paradigms employed in analysis. When examining groups such as indigenous peoples who have been colonized in one way or another for centuries, these considerations are vital.

I commence the methodology chapter by describing La Paz as the city of policy making and state rule. Secondly, I justify my overall methodological approach by describing the changing political circumstances of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. Thirdly, I provide a description and explanation of my fieldwork and the methodological tools used. The final section discusses my own positioning within a highly contentious research setting of political turmoil and state formation. Reflexivity becomes an important term here. My challenge has been to find methodological tools that make the empirical realities of contemporary Bolivia comprehensible and analytically thinkable.

## **2.1 LA PAZ AS A MICROCOSM OF THE STATE**

La Paz is an extraordinary city. Its uniqueness rests in its geography, people, and history. Located at 3,660 meters above sea level in the western part of Bolivia, it is the highest capital in the world and the third largest city in Bolivia. Of around 10.6 million Bolivians, approximately 850,000 resided in La Paz, while the largest city, Santa Cruz in the eastern lowlands, had a population of around 1.7 million in 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas 2014). The second largest city, El Alto, which surrounds the capital on the high plateau to the northwest, had a population of more than 970,000 inhabitants (*ibid.*). Built in a canyon, the continuously expanding neighborhoods of La Paz are located at varying altitudes starting from the snowy, windy Andean high plateau at more than 4,000 meters above sea level and dropping to the sunny southern districts at less than 3,000. The city is surrounded by mountains, with its most notable landmark, the impressive, snow-capped mountain Illimani, facing it in the south and towering to more than 6,000 meters. These bring chills and occasional snow to the city during winter, while stark, high altitude sunshine warms during the day. The weather contrast between the higher and lower districts is marked.

Weather differences correlate with other contrasts. Poverty, inequalities, and ethnic disparities are inscribed in the physical and geographical settings of the city. The higher one climbs along the steep hillsides the poorer become the neighborhoods. These are predominantly indigenous areas, mainly populated by Aymara migrants from high plateau rural communities but also from elsewhere. The steep, narrow streets are lined with rows of red brick and adobe buildings and shacks, many of which seem to be in a continuous process of construction (or destruction). The continuous expansion of the city up the steep hillsides is hazardous for its poorer migrant inhabitants as harsh and changeable weather conditions such as heavy rains can cause disastrous mudslides and

other problems. Up in the high plateau, La Paz is surrounded by El Alto that began as “an outgrowth of its indigenous periphery” (Lazar 2008: 30–1), a fast-growing city in which 74 percent of the population self-identifies as Aymara (ibid.: 2). In the most obvious ways, El Alto functions as a crossroads between the geographically vast, Andean indigenous rural areas and the modern administrative capital of the country. As Goldstein (2004: 12–3) has remarked, rural areas have traditionally symbolized backwardness and urban cities modernity with respective racial categorizations between indigenous populations and whites inscribed in geographical spaces.

The main *autopista* (highway) heading downhill from El Alto passes through the poorest neighborhoods of the capital: industrial zones, vast, teeming market areas, bus stations and traffic centers. It eventually splits at the *Plaza San Francisco* into *Avenida Camacho*, where many commercial banks, insurance companies, and some state institutions are located, and *Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz*, the main avenue which later turns into *Avenida 16 de Julio* (“*Prado*”), lined by governmental premises, a few trade unions, banks, restaurants, and shops of all kinds. While this is where the main ministries are located, the presidential palace and the parliament are located at the *Plaza Murillo*, a historical city center a few blocks east above the main avenue. The triangle of the main avenue, presidential palace, and the parliament is also the prime hotspot for street protests, movement activism, and governmental gatherings. The *Universidad Mayor de San Andrés* (UMSA), the largest Bolivian public university and the hub of student activism is situated at the southern end of the main avenue. From the university southwards, the city scene transforms into the upper middle class residential neighborhoods of *San Jorge* and *Sopocachi*. Most embassies and development agencies are located here, the massive American Embassy building on *Avenida Arce* being a prime example. Several private universities and NGOs are also located in this area.

Passing *San Jorge* and *Sopocachi* on the way down the hill, the roads lead to the southern districts of the city, where the residential area of *Obrajes* turns eventually into palm-tree lined avenues packed with business men, young people cruising in their four-wheel drives, foreign-brand stores and restaurants, and foreign business premises. We have reached the affluent business sectors and the wealthy residential areas such as *Calacoto* and *Achumani*, where the *paceño* elite mostly reside. In this part of the city, indigenous peoples are rarely seen as anything but domestic workers and guards for the wealthy whites or *criollos* – both foreigners and Bolivians. Some development agencies and INGOs have their offices here.

La Paz is the administrative capital of the country. Although Sucre remains the judicial capital even today, La Paz became *de facto* administrative capital in 1899 after the uprising of a new, liberal *paceño* elite, with their indigenous allies under the leadership of Pablo Zárate Willka claiming regional autonomy (Klein 2003: 156–7). It was founded at the heart of indigenous Aymara lands in 1548, when a trade route was needed to the

first Spanish settlement at Chuquisaca (later Sucre), and to connect the continent's largest silver mines at Potosí with the town of Cusco and ultimately with the Spanish authorities in Lima (Qayum 2002: 276). From its inception it grew into the hotspot for indigenous rebellions, starting with the three-month siege of the town under the leadership of Túpac Katari's heroic figure during the massive Great Rebellion (1780–1782) that Hylton and Thomson (2007) have called the first project of 'Indian political sovereignty'. By the mid-eighteenth century, La Paz was the largest settlement and a growing commercial and agricultural market town in *Charcas* or Upper Peru, as Bolivia was called at the time (Klein 2003: 63). As the hub of administration, La Paz is the location for the central government, presidency, and the parliament; it hosts the main state bureaucracies. Therefore, La Paz has historically symbolized central state powers (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007) and until the 1980s, both economic and political powers were centered in the city. With the collapse of the world market prices of tin and the subsequent diminishing of the importance of the mining sectors, the economic centers of the country gradually shifted from the Andean highlands to the Santa Cruz area. Today Santa Cruz is not solely Bolivia's most populous city but also its main financial and economic center due to the increasing role of hydrocarbons and export-oriented agriculture to the Bolivian economy (Crabtree 2005).

More than Santa Cruz, however, La Paz represents a microcosm of the Bolivian state. Resembling that country of contradictions, it comprises contrasts in weather conditions, geography, and people. These notable diversities and stark contradictions present themselves as various scales of dichotomies – and all shades of grey between the extremes of cold-hot, up-down, indigenous-white, and poor-rich (on the division of national space, see Goldstein 2004). Diversity and multiplicity are inscribed in its soils and architecture, where various internally heterogeneous elements continually meet, overlap, and complement each others. Chaotic and turbulent semi-autonomous *barrios*, where hundreds of thousands of indigenous inhabitants reside, meet with modern skyscrapers and palm-tree-lined avenues where the state and economic powers are located. Gaps between poverty and wealth are enormous, and ethnic and class-based inequalities follow similar patterns as elsewhere in Bolivia. With its extraordinary political volatility, tensions and conflicts continually lurk under the surface, and spill over with the slightest provocation. Curiously enough, La Paz in Spanish language signifies peace yet, far from peaceful, as a city of contrasts, La Paz is an arena for political contestations. Often tensions and conflicts between state powers and social movements burst into flame within its urban landscapes. During these moments, the nature of La Paz as the microcosm of changing state-society relations is evident – a further dichotomy – as different concentrations of power and political forces compete. Therefore, it is appropriate that La Paz, containing a concentration of state powers, should have become a center of indigenous resistance.

As a result, those whose main characteristic has been resistance have today become

the deciding and implementing agents of state policies: as one says in Spanish, they have shifted *de la resistencia a las propuestas* (from resistance to proposals). With past social movements now in power, the contentious dichotomy of state and society has become more porous as the society side of the divide has stepped into the corridors of state power. While indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups have generally been examined either as targets of state policy or subjects of contentious politics, this study breaks methodological ground by following them to the centers where state policies are negotiated and disputed. Therefore, I aim to provide a case for the ethnographic scrutiny of indigenous peoples in unexpected positions and locations: as policymakers at the centers of state institutions.

## 2.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

We have to end with this colonial state. Imagine this: after 180 years of a democratic republic, we have just recently been able to arrive where we are today; in the parliament, in the presidency...[my translation]  
Evo Morales's inauguration speech (Ministerio de la Presidencia 2006)

While discussing local-global articulations, Tsing (2007) has noted that anthropological accounts of indigenous peoples often regard national political scenes as irrelevant for the analysis of indigeneity. I believe this has to do with both theoretical and methodological choices in the ethnographic (or anthropological) toolbox. As Tsing suggests, ethnographic research is typically based on either thick description of contextualized indigenous experiences in specific (rural) locations or comparative generalizations of indigeneity around the globe (ibid.: 33). These community studies, often reifying unified indigenous experience worldwide, tend to make ethnographers either privileged experts of local (indigenous) worldviews and traditions, or spokespersons for global (indigenous) rights (de la Cadena and Starn 2007). It makes them strong on thick description of local diversity and global concerns, but weak on understanding political and economic contestations at national levels. Although it is true that nation-states have been increasingly losing their role as the sole vehicles of sovereign power with the increase of global and local actors (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three), this does not mean that states have lost their importance altogether. It is, therefore, not acceptable for ethnographers to dismiss the role of the state as an irrelevant reference point for indigenous experience. As our particular localities and global arenas are complex, contested, and dynamic, so are the states that are under transformation. In this study, I am committed to Tsing's (2007) idea that nation-states do matter for indigenous causes.

The importance of the state as the field of study is especially relevant in contemporary Bolivia where indigenous peoples have been able to enter the centers of state transformation

and policy making. The 2005 national elections made a difference in the relationships between those who have traditionally governed the country and those who have been governed. Evo Morales and the MAS seized approximately 54 percent of the vote (Morales 2012: 590). Morales was elected the first indigenous president of the country and the MAS won 84 seats in the parliament; 12 of 27 in the Senate and 72 of 130 in the Lower Chamber (ibid.: 595). With this massive representation, the MAS also succeeded in winning 54 percent of seats in the Constituent Assembly, established in 2006 (Van Cott 2008: 56). Because of the rapid rise of the MAS, social movements now had a new, and unexpected, role within the main political arenas of the Bolivian state. Dunkerley, for example, has vividly described the MAS' early executive as an "entirely inexperienced cabinet comprised of indigenous activists (of all ages), sixty-something left-wingers from the 1970s, and forty-something radical intellectuals from the 1990s" (2007: 134). Salman has described the emergence of the new political elite in terms of three categories: 1) intellectual and bohemian blanco-mestizos mostly comprising progressive university professors, NGO staff members, journalists, and the like; 2) members of a wealthy urban indigenous population of mostly Aymara and Quechua origins, and; 3) social movement leaders that "prefer 'movements' over 'institutions', and 'struggle' over 'governance'" (2009: 102). In the 2009 national elections, the political success of the MAS continued when they gained 64 percent of the vote (Morales 2012: 593). Morales started his second term of presidency and the MAS seized a two-third majority both in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. In the general elections in 2014 Morales is yet again the MAS' presidential candidate amidst dispersed and weak oppositional parties and coalitions.

This study is a response to the challenge of the changing circumstances of indigenous peoples in contemporary Bolivia: if representatives of social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions have shifted from rural communities to the presidential palace and ministerial cabinets, the methodological choices of those who study indigenous peoples have to respond to this situation. We must follow them. Anthropologists have traditionally chosen ethnographic fieldsites that are "as little contaminated by development as possible" (Ferguson 1997: 161). Gupta and Ferguson (1997) refer to this as the 'hierarchy of purity' among fieldsites: those that are most appreciated academically have typically been rural, "pre-modern", face-to-face communities that are arguably "untouched" by outside forces, such as development aid and state bureaucracy. Since the late 1980s, this understanding of ethnography has been increasingly questioned (Appadurai 1986; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995). Marcus (1995) has suggested that in today's world the scope of ethnographic research has to be re-evaluated. Instead of sticking to the conventional one place, one people, one culture (that often tends to represent a single ethnic group: the *ethnos* of ethnography) mode of research, he suggests undertaking ethnography that fits with the study of our contemporary world (see also, Rabinow and Marcus with Faubion and Rees 2008). My study is a continuation of

this critique. As one alternative, Marcus suggests that ethnographers should design their research around “chains, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites” (1995: 105). These chains or threads can revolve around people, material objects, metaphors, stories, or biographies that an ethnographer must follow. Marcus (ibid.: 108) defines the metaphor technique, for example, in the following way:

When the thing traced is within the realm of discourse and modes of thought, then the circulation of signs, symbols, and metaphors guides the design of ethnography. This mode involves trying to trace the social correlates and groundings of associations that are most clearly alive in language use and print...

The notion of *vivir bien* as indigenous policy is a discursive and conceptual construction that becomes visible in discourses and representations of the state. Therefore, I follow diverse discourses, documents, and perceptions of *vivir bien*, trying to grasp ethnographically the characteristics of its appearance in diverse social settings. At the same time, I track the notion of *vivir bien* in the everyday practices of public servants, consultants, and state bureaucracy more generally. Although now in the corridors of power, many new politicians are more familiar with indigenous activism, peasant marches, and community traditions than with the affluence of the traditional Bolivian elite, the traditions of bureaucratic-institutional structures, and the “cosmologies” and “rituals” of the state. Therefore, I have adopted a double strategy: obeying Riles’ (2001) methodological recommendation to render the familiar – such as state bureaucracy or development apparatus – exotic, and therefore, accessible ethnographically (see Li 2007 for a similar view), while also observing indigenous ideas in an unfamiliar site for ethnographic inquiry, that is, the state. I believe that this dual strategy underlines indigeneity as fluid, perplex, multiple, dynamic, and contested. In contemporary Bolivia, indigenous peoples no longer stick to a singular site, territory, or community, if they ever did.

## **2.3 ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AND SPECIFIC METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES**

Traditionally, ethnographic research has been based on long-term fieldwork structured around participant-observation of a specific group of people in a specific, often distant and rural, geographic location. As a methodology, ethnography has striven for systematic description and deep understanding of people in a specific place and time. Ethnographic insights have been drawn from the personal involvement of the researcher in the lives of the people s/he studies in order to learn and understand their perceptions and ways of



life. While drawing on traditional anthropological belief in the importance of fieldwork, deep understanding of people and the personal involvement of the researcher, my study undertakes the task of examining a context traditionally studied by political scientists, political sociologists, and political economists: the state. It is a contribution to the ethnographic study of the state. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork among ministers, public servants, development experts, and indigenous activists in La Paz for six months from September 2008 until February 2009. Additionally, I had previously lived and worked in Cochabamba, La Paz, and various indigenous communities in the region of Charazani north of La Paz in 2001 and 2002 for a total of 13 months. During this time I also briefly visited various indigenous communities in the Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and Potosí regions.

Yet, to apply an ethnographic approach to studying the state in which new indigenous policy discourses and practices are circulating has been a challenging task. As Marcus (1995: 99) aptly points out, the difficulty in doing this is that:

Ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups. The idea that ethnography might expand from its committed localism to represent a system much better apprehended by abstract models and aggregate statistics seems antithetical to its very nature and thus beyond its limits.

My response to this challenge has been to examine state discourses and practices. Its starting point is the idea, represented by Trouillot, that “the state is a set of practices and processes and the effects they produce as much as a way to look at them [which is why] we need to track down these practices, processes, and effects” (2003: 89). What ethnographic examination can bring to the study of states is the understanding that the state is not a given, fixed entity but a complex set of everyday practices, discourses, institutions, and structures constructed by a diversity of actors. Ethnographic study, as Ferguson and Gupta have suggested, can rather “bring together the ideological and material aspects of state construction, and understand how ‘the state’ comes into being, how ‘it’ is differentiated from other institutional forms, and what effects this construction has on the operation and diffusion of power throughout society” (2005: 8).

My study is also influenced by another non-traditional strand of anthropological research: ‘ethnography of aid’ (sometimes termed ‘ethnography of policy’). It is a branch of ethnographic research that has developed during the last few decades within the disciplines of social anthropology and development studies (see, for example, Ferguson 1994; Gould and Marcussen eds. 2004; Li 2007; Mosse 2005; Mosse and Lewis eds. 2005) and to a lesser extent within political sciences (see, for example, Mitchell 2002). Ethnographies of aid investigate the workings of development aid: its policies and practices, structures and institutions. By asking how discourses and practices of change are produced and how they work, ethnographic studies of development policy and state can demonstrate the internal

discrepancies between policy and practice, unintended effects of policy efforts, multiple intentions and social logics between different kinds of actors, and the real-life functioning of things beyond official discourses.

My major methodological inspiration comes from Li (2007) whose ‘ethnography of government’ frames the governmental ‘will to improve’ (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three), inherent in both state policies and transnational development interventions, as the combination of governmental rationalities and situated practices. What, nevertheless, makes my methodological contribution different is that while Li (2007) portrays the state and development apparatus as sources of the practice of government and indigenous peoples as its targets (with the possibility to confront it politically), contemporary Bolivia offers us a case in which indigenous peoples have become creators of alternative policy ideas.

In order to grasp what was going on in this highly complex and mobile field, I chose to use various ethnographic techniques of investigation, the crucial ones being a combination of such specific methods as policy analysis, participant-observation, and interviewing. The use of various sources of data has enabled me to practice triangulation: to examine data from various perspectives and to complement one form of data with other sources (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In the following, I will turn to specifying the methodological tools of my research in a more concrete manner.

### **2.3.1 Policy Documents as Entry Points**

Documents are specific kinds of ethnographic artifacts (Riles 2006). When the state is the field of research, documents represent natural sources of data because they “are paradigmatic artifacts of modern knowledge practices” (ibid.: 2). Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that many of the social settings ethnographers study today are “self-documenting, in the sense that their members are engaged in the production and circulation of various kinds of written material” (2007: 121). State bureaucracies are major examples of this which is why it is also important to examine their literary social activity which manifests itself in multiple kinds of documents. As Foucault has pointed out, this is a source of discursive power that produces and objectifies the subjects that use them (Reed 2006). Shore and Wright consider policy documents as loci of political technologies that conceal the operations of power in “the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed” (1997: 8). Yet ethnographic reading of policies may not give these documents such an overpowering role in transforming their readers and users (Riles 2006). There is always some room for manoeuvre.

Policy documents can give us important insights onto governmental rationalities in the age of globalization. While they are often representations of the state, in today’s world

modern knowledge practices that impact the formulation and usage of policy are global in orientation. Sharma and Gupta have suggested that IFIs, development agencies, and NGOs affect policy discourses because they occur “in a spatial frame that transcends the nation” (2006b: 18–9). While observational data and interviewing portray images of contested practices of government and politics, policy guidelines, policy papers, and programme documents illuminate governmental rationalities and forms of knowledge that attempt to unify the discourse of the state.

The main document examined here is the National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Bolivia digna, soberana, productiva, y democrática para Vivir Bien* 2006–2011). This policy guideline has two nearly parallel versions. The first is an electronic version elaborated in June 2006 and the second, which I have analyzed, is a revised and printed version published in 2007 by the Ministry of Development Planning. The plan, which is divided into four sections and involves a conceptual introduction to the notion of *vivir bien*, has provided Bolivian ministries an overall policy framework for their sectoral policies and bureaucratic practice. Another important document here is the *Plan Nacional para la Igualdad de Oportunidades* (2008) that offers an example of how indigenous ideas are translated into policy. Third is the new Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, approved in January 2009. In 2010, Morales’ regime launched a new governmental programme (*Rumbo a una Bolivia Líder: 2010–2015 Programa de Gobierno*) with a section entitled the National Development Plan. Although this newest programme is not at the core of this study, it has, however, provided me further evidence with which to support my fieldwork observations.

Additionally, I use a variety of other ministerial documents to complement those already listed. These include policy papers on the theories and practices of *vivir bien* such as *Avances conceptuales del vivir bien: Elementos para construir criterios teórico-operacionales* (2008), elaborated by the consultant Rubén Arteaga Ulo, as well as *Propuesta de desarrollo y programación de los PSD* (2008a) and *Seguimiento y evaluación de los PSD* (2008b)<sup>10</sup>, distributed to those present at the *vivir bien* methodology workshops in late 2008. After my departure from Bolivia, the Vice-Minister of Planning and Coordination, Noel Aguirre, provided me with important documents and presentations that had been presented at the seminar *Vivir bien: una alternativa transformadora de desarrollo* by such peasant unions and indigenous organizations as the CSUTCB and the CONAMAQ, as well as research institutions such as AGRUCO, an agro-ecology center of the University of San Simon in Cochabamba.<sup>11</sup> Finally, I have also looked at the two-year monitoring report, compiled by the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Government (2009), of the governmental execution of policies, programmes, projects and funds.

10 The acronym PSD stands for *Planes Sectoriales de Desarrollo*, that is, sectoral development plans.

11 AGRUCO has elaborated methodological tools, such as development indicators, for the practical implementation of the principles of *vivir bien* in development efforts.

### 2.3.2 Participant-Observation

The second method for gathering data was participant-observation. I had an opportunity to observe closely the functioning of state bureaucracy and to get closely acquainted with some of the new political and policy actors in a highly volatile political situation. Although I moved back and forth between ministries, development agencies, universities, social movements and other actors, I was able to observe most closely the internal functioning of the Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination, an entity responsible for elaborating and monitoring state policy making. It was led by the Vice-Minister of Planning and Coordination Noel Aguirre, a former NGO professional, who had, to my surprise, worked closely with the NGO where I had volunteered in 2001 (more on this in 2.4.1) and was an eager promoter of indigenous terminologies as state policy. Although our initial contact was greatly enhanced by my earlier donor contacts (see 2.4.1), the NGO linkage was a crucial factor in establishing confidential relationships and in facilitating my access to the ministry. Getting to know the vice-minister was crucial in determining the kind of knowledge to which I was able to have access. Negotiating access to the field can be painstakingly hard (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), but in my case it was facilitated by the happy coincidence of mutual experiences and interests.

I was able to visit the premises of the vice-ministry quite regularly (at least twice a week, sometimes more often, with one week gaps every now and then due to issues such as travelling). These visits included both pre-scheduled and spontaneous meetings with the vice-minister and his staff. After becoming acquainted and establishing friendships with some executive directors, public servants and consultants, I could pop in from the busy main avenue *Mariscal Santa Cruz* of La Paz' city center, through the first floor security check, to the second floor open-space offices to chat with anyone whom I knew who happened to be present. I was also invited to some internal staff meetings where the notion of *vivir bien* was discussed. These included meetings with indigenous intellectuals and activists. With time, I also started to meet some public servants and consultants outside the office and working hours: in restaurants, bars, parks, and at their homes. During the initial stages of my fieldwork, I discussed with Aguirre the possibility of regularly participating in the daily activities of the vice-ministry, but unfortunately this was never fully achieved. For this reason, and also for ethical reasons discussed later on, my study has a stronger emphasis on interviewing as a form of data collection than traditional ethnographic fieldwork.

After several meetings and interviews with the vice-minister, he invited me to participate in, and to observe, policy events where the notion of *vivir bien* was being operationalized into state practice. Most specifically these related to the planning of sectoral development plans. Organized by the Ministry of Development Planning, these events gathered together hundreds of executive directors, public servants, consultants, and

stakeholders from different ministerial sectors. By participating in these policy-shaping events, I was able to meet people from various ministries and state institutions. It also gave me contacts through which I had the opportunity to visit most ministerial premises and to interview people from a range of different ministries and institutions. Getting to know to people also facilitated my entrance to further policy events in different ministries in which sectoral projects were planned and operationalized.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the vice-minister who facilitated my access to policy issues, I had two other channels that I used to get access to important sources of data. The first was a range of international development agencies. Because of my work experience at the UN in 2002 (see 4.2.1), I had established various contacts with international and national development experts. On returning to Bolivia to examine Morales' policy initiatives, I had an opportunity to listen to these people's experiences of how development policy and practice had changed over the years. Additionally, when I made contacts with different international development agencies and interviewed various (mostly Bolivian) development experts, it became clear that many people currently working in the donor community had occupied major political positions prior to Morales' election. Therefore, by talking to donors, I was also unexpectedly able to gain insights onto earlier governments' policy visions and political ideologies opposed to those of the contemporary governing regime.

While preparing to go to the field, I had also established contacts with people from Bolivian migrant communities. When in the field, it appeared that numbers of Bolivians who had migrated to Europe and elsewhere had returned home in search of labor and income opportunities that they were hoping Morales' election would provide. While I was leaning on some of these people in hope of establishing valuable contacts for my research, it seemed that my presence was seen by some as an opportunity for individual gain in terms of finding an access to ministries in order to enhance their own interests. Therefore, while, on the one hand, I did get access to some vice-ministries through these contacts, on the other, I soon realized that people whom I hardly knew were attempting to take advantage of me in order to promote individual political and economic interests. This became painfully clear after an interview with one minister who, after politely answering all my questions, asked whether we could now discuss the establishment of commercial relations between his ministry and Finland. It was not an issue I was aware was on the agenda; rather it was at the heart of the interests of those who had set up the meeting. Through these same contacts I also became very quickly acquainted with complex webs of political schemes that were circulating in and around ministries and among people only loosely linked with the MAS. One evening, for example, I found

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12 In addition to state bureaucracy and policy events, I participated in various public seminars organized both by academic institutions and social movements. Some of these seminars were organized in coordination with decision- and policy-makers. The themes discussed included post-neoliberalism, Latin American Left, rise of social movements, and feminism among others.

myself in a meeting of the political opposition, including members of the military and the police force, introduced by the same people who during the day had appeared to be best friends with the MAS executive. These events became crucial ethnographic data for understanding how politics and power worked in many complicated ways.

I was also able to participate in and observe many important political events organized both by social movements and the governing regime. Yet the first politically inflated affair occurred when I had not yet stepped foot on the Bolivian soil. My trip from Finland to Bolivia coincided with one of the most violent and contentious period of political turmoil since the election of Morales. Because of the alleged involvement of the US in massive and violent oppositional protests against the new constitution, the US ambassador was being expelled from Bolivia and diplomatic relations between the countries were severed.<sup>13</sup> When finally in the field, many important political events took place. After a turbulent September full of oppositional activities, it was the time for social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions to show their power. In a mid-October mobilization, thousands of indigenous peoples and peasants from all over the country marched to La Paz demanding the approval of the constitutional referendum. While ministries and development agencies closed their offices, I concentrated my observations on the contentious politics on the streets. Prior to this, *los Ponchos Rojos*, a militant Aymara indigenous movement from the Andean province of Omasuyos, had blocked the main central avenue, *Prado*, and was protesting in front of the principal ministries. In December, the CONAMAQ organized a peaceful indigenous march to defend the constitutional process.

January 2009 was a time of governmental celebrations. A massive celebration of three years of Morales' administration was held at the *Plaza Murillo*. All the ministers were present; MAS parliamentarians took part in the celebrations; and indigenous peoples, peasants, and social movements from all over the country joined thousands of *paceños* to cheer Morales' speech, to listen to folklore music groups, to watch fireworks, and to dance all night long. While less than fifty years ago the main square, surrounded by the centers of political power, was prohibited to Bolivian *indios*, indigenous symbols – *whiphala* flags, traditional dresses, musical instruments, and the sounds of folk music – now permeated the space. It was followed by the referendum over the constitution that took place January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009. I attended Election Day at the crowded school premises in the upper-middle-class neighborhood of Sopocachi where Vice-President García Linera was

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13 The political opposition had rioted for some time in order to oppose the new constitution. Governmental buildings had been attacked. Media outlets had been shut down. In Pando, one of the lowland regions governed by pro-opposition political leaders, a massacre of pro-MAS peasants had occurred. A state of siege was declared. The expelling of the ambassador led to the expelling of the US ambassador from Venezuela and the promise by Hugo Chávez to send army troops to Bolivia; this, for its part, led to regional unrest mediated by the government of Chile. (Postero 2013: 43; on the US ambassador Goldberg case, see Webber 2011: 196.)

voting. A massive celebration on the night of the approval of the new constitution took place at the same *Plaza Murillo* as a few days earlier. Evo Morales spoke to the crowds of thousands of people from the balcony of the presidential palace, joined by García Linera and the cabinet of ministers. After the Plaza, I ended up at the campaign offices of one of the MAS parliamentarians with a group of more than a hundred urban, upper-middle-class revolutionaries dancing to folk music and singing revolutionary songs, thereby demonstrating the multiplicity of the MAS supporters' ideological beliefs.

The relatively short time that I spent in Bolivia can be considered a handicap in my fieldwork. There is no doubt that a longer period of time would have been useful for examining the routines of state bureaucracy. Yet, given that I had prior experience in Bolivia, relatively easy and very quick access to important sources of information through various channels, and that I was culturally and language-wise well equipped prior to entering the field, I was able to conduct very dynamic and intensive fieldwork with data-collection starting to become saturated towards the end of my stay. Wolcott has suggested that “the essence of fieldwork is revealed by intent rather than by location” (2005: 58), and, in fact, it does not often end simply because you physically leave the location of your study. This is very true in my case. Social media has provided me a crucial forum wherein to update my knowledge of the latest news among my informants and in Bolivia more generally. Additionally, the University of Helsinki and other Finnish institutions and NGOs have hosted various visits by Bolivian academic scholars (Luis Tapia, a political scientist from CIDES-UMSA, in 2009), political figures (such as the Bolivian ambassadors in Sweden and René Orellana, the climate negotiator for the Morales' government, in 2012), and regional indigenous organizations (*Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica*, COICA, in 2012). Additionally, President Evo Morales visited the University of Helsinki in May 2010 during his Nordic tour. My active involvement in these events has enabled me to continue with my fieldwork and active communication with Bolivians on the soil of my own country. It has been, *par excellence*, multi-sited ethnography introduced by Marcus (1995).

Furthermore, there has been an emerging interest among Finnish NGOs and social movements in the notion of *vivir bien*. Consequently, various activities, seminars, and discussions have been organized, incorporating activists from all over the world, to discuss political alternatives constructed on the basis of cultural discourses. Finnish activists have gone on to assist in the dissemination of these ideas to such diverse places as Kenya and India, where they have been shared with local activist groups: an interesting topic for possible future research.



### 2.3.3 Interviewing

In addition to the time spent in the field, another challenge in my fieldwork was the difficulty of being constantly present in the lives of the people I studied. In traditional, often small and rural, ethnographic settings participation in, and observation of, everyday practices is facilitated by the compact size of the observable location and people. Within the state, it is difficult, or even impossible, to linger in the ministries, and after working hours, ministers, public servants, and consultants all go in different directions. Therefore, I decided to complement participant-observation with the systematic use of interviewing. Although ethnographers have tended to give more prestige to spontaneous conversations and participation in everyday life in order to interfere as little as possible in the data (Wolcott 2005: 155), in the case of modern bureaucracies presolicited visits and interviewing may in fact be a more practical way to conduct research than aimless “hanging around” in the institutions. My tactic was to use reflexive, semi-structured interviews as much as possible, meaning that many were closer to conversations than formal interviews. In addition to conversational interviewing, I had a chance to conduct life-history collection with a few key informants, and I also used projective techniques such as questions related to the future of the interviewed individual and the institution/group s/he was representing. An obvious benefit arising from the social characteristics of my fieldsite was that in bureaucracies there was no restriction on making notes. Documenting and recording interviews were in fact encouraged as a natural part of bureaucratic practices.

Interviews were also observational events. Presolicited meetings with various kinds of officials and experts gave me a chance to enter the premises of ministries and development agencies and to observe bureaucrats in action, which otherwise would have been difficult to do. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have indeed suggested that in ethnographic fieldwork “there is no need to privilege either participant observation or interviewing as the primary source of data, once one recognizes that spoken discourse always takes place within forms of action or performance” (Quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 170). As discursive events, interviews were actually part of the everyday lives of decision-makers, such as ministers and vice-ministers. There were tens of individuals and groups of people queuing daily at their offices in order to make a request or express concern on specific matters important to them. This procedure was an integral part of the construction of their authority. Presolicited interviews were also a comfortable fit with the everyday bureaucratic routines of public servants, who appreciated the assumed formality, neutrality, and objectivity of these encounters. All things considered, interviewing appeared an optimal methodological choice when the state was the fieldwork site.

All in all, I conducted sixty ethnographic interviews. They included fifty-four individual interviews and six group interviews with political and policy actors (see,



Appendix 2). All but three interviews were taped<sup>14</sup>, and later they were transcribed. The topics varied reflexively according to the interviewed individuals and groups, location, and time of the fieldwork (topics early on in the fieldwork were more general than those raised at the end). In general, the questions were directed at disclosing the perceptions of different actors of the notion of *vivir bien*, its introduction to policy-making, its content, practices, and challenges. A more general conversational framework for these questions was built around the ongoing process of Bolivian state transformation and the role of indigenous peoples and social movements within it.

The ministers and vice-ministers whom I interviewed represented the Ministry of Development Planning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Transparency and Fight Against Corruption, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Autonomies, and the Ministry of Mining.<sup>15</sup> The greatest number of interviews was conducted with Noel Aguirre. Other ministerial contacts came either through making a formal petition for an interview or informally through influential friends or events in which I participated. Contacts with public servants and consultants working in the Ministry of Development Planning and other ministries were initially facilitated by Aguirre and later by my participation in policy events. Although most of the interviewed public servants and consultants worked at the Ministry of Development Planning, I also had interviews with those working in foreign affairs, education, environment, social protection, decentralization, rural development and lands, and presidency. After initial contacts, I used snowball sampling methods, asking the interviewed individuals to recommend me to new informants. Although I chose not to follow all the recommendations, this strategy offered me an important opportunity to map social connections and relations which could markedly differ between interviewees from different categories (public servants, development donors, social movements), but also correlate in interesting ways.

Functionaries of international development agencies represented the following organizations: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)<sup>16</sup>, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), USAID, the World Bank, and the UN agencies. Three of the interviewed donor representatives were foreign, while the rest were Bolivian professionals. Many had served earlier governments as economists,

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14 The USAID was the sole place where my tape recorder and cellular phone were confiscated by the security guards. If I had solicited an interview with the use of tape recorder, it would have been possible. Two other taped interviews were lost due to technical problems, and solely hand written notes exist.

15 It has to be remembered that the fluctuation of ministers and vice-ministers in the current government is continuous and rapid. Therefore, many of those whom I interviewed do not currently occupy the position they had at the time of my fieldwork.

16 Since January 2011 the German development cooperation has operated as *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ).

advisors, and some even as vice-ministers. In general, ministers, academics, and experts were very analytic, explicit, and open about their views of policy and political processes. It seemed that although elites and experts “are not themselves doing science..., they’re reflective about their lives [that] are cut by...scientific or legal or financial vectors of truth claims” (Rabinow and Marcus with Faubion and Rees 2008: 78).

Some indigenous organizations, social movements, and peasant unions were also eager to provide information about the Bolivian political situation and to let the outside world know their version of the process of state transformation. As Bolivia’s political change and indigenous uprising have been of great interest to foreign researchers and media, it became apparent to me that representatives of the social movements were used to giving interviews to foreign media. Political speeches known by heart started as soon as the tape recorder was switched on. This made it difficult to get behind the façade, and I am not sure if I ever did. With academic scholars who had written about *vivir bien* or indigenous worldviews and cosmologies more in general, I had more luck. Other intellectuals that I interviewed included those who had written about social movements and indigenous political activism. I also interviewed a few scholars who had openly criticized the political agenda of the MAS.

On the basis of interviews, the political opposition seems to be underrepresented. This, indeed, is the case and it is so by choice. This study concentrates first and foremost on the internal contestations and power relations in the state bureaucracy and among agents of change including decision-makers and social movements. Therefore, conflicts, contestations, and power struggles between the MAS and the political opposition or between the Andean highlands and the Bolivian lowlands where most of the political opposition resides are not at the core of this study. Yet these battles obviously contextualize the contemporary process of change. Although I conducted merely two interviews with oppositional political figures (one with a parliamentarian from the lowlands and another with a presidential candidate for the opposition), the views of the opposition are not totally absent in my data. While interviewing, it became quite clear that the heterogeneous political opposition was well represented both in development agencies and in academic circles. Additionally, I was able to participate in events and meetings of the political opposition, although I did not conduct formal interviews. Some of the discussions at the meetings I taped with the consent of the participants and later discussed them in normal settings without conducting formal interviews.

Out of 54 individual interviews, only 12 were with women. Out of 13 individuals participating in group interviews, only 3 were women. The gender balance was most equal in indigenous organizations, social movements, and NGOs, as well as among international development agencies. The most serious imbalances were among ministers and vice-ministers, public servants, and intellectuals. To some extent this reflected the

masculine nature of decision-making processes and the state bureaucracy in Bolivia.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, female decision-makers and public servants were less eager to share their time with me than males in corresponding positions. With female public servants I had more informal discussions than presolicited interviews.

## **2.4 POSITIONING WITHIN CONTENTIOUS POLITICS**

Reflexivity has for long been an integral part of qualitative social sciences. Together with the literary turn and the critique of functionalist and structuralist anthropology, relationships between the ethnographer and his/her informants were re-evaluated towards the end of the previous century, and reflexivity emerged at the center of methodological choices (Clifford and Marcus eds. 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Rabinow 1977). Drawing on Foucault's elaborations of power and knowledge relations, it was increasingly argued that ethnographic knowledge production was loaded with power relations. Reflexivity was a response to this realization. As a research strategy, its aim is to make explicit various positions that researcher holds while in the field, and the effects that these positionings have on ethnographic knowledge production (Rantala 2006). Reflexivity displays and makes explicit what Rabinow has called the public self: "the culturally mediated and historically situated self which finds itself in the continuously changing world of meaning" (1977: 5–6).

In his early account of reflexive ethnography, Rabinow (1977) argued that reflexivity functions as a meeting point for knowledge production, politics, and research ethics, as the researcher's multiple positionings relevant to understanding the research setting and research questions are made accessible. Such authors as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Haraway (1991) have suggested that in qualitative social sciences the researcher is inevitably biased in one way or another because of his/her various positionings related to, for example, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and political views; therefore, it is important to be open about them in order to increase the objectivity of one's scientific contributions. Cerwonka and Malkki (2007), indeed, argue that in ethnographic research, the positionality of the researcher cannot be excised from the knowledge that s/he produces of the object of research: who the researcher is as a social and cultural person affects the nature of the knowledge produced. Drawing on these ideas, in the following I will describe and analyze my positionality within contentious Bolivian politics. Being reflexive about this has provided important insights on how power functions in Bolivian politics and state bureaucracy.

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<sup>17</sup> These gender imbalances have changed to some extent since my fieldwork, especially in relation to politically nominated positions. After the approval of the new constitution and Morales' presidential re-election in 2009, women and men have been equally represented at least in the ministerial cabinet.

### 2.4.1 Personal Experiences amidst Indigenous Politics

The interest that I have in the notion of *vivir bien* derives from my personal experiences of working with indigenous NGOs and indigenous communities. The importance of the concept of *sumaq kawsay* (the Quechua term for good life) to Andean indigenous mobilizations first caught my attention in 2001 when as a student of social anthropology, I participated in a six-month volunteer exchange between a Finnish NGO platform and a Bolivian NGO working on indigenous rights and intercultural education. Regionally linked with Andean indigenous NGOs in Ecuador and Peru, the NGO used the notion of *sumaq kawsay* as the overarching principle through which it promoted the revalorization of indigenous cultural traditions and worldviews as alternatives to Western development discourses; the latter included notions such as economic growth, human rights, gender equality, democracy, and so forth. Instead, such issues as community values, collective ownership, mutual support, a holistic conception of time, the complementarity of men and women, and a spiritual relationship with lands and territories were argued to be “natural” and “inherent” characteristics of indigenous cultures. The notion of *sumaq kawsay*, through which indigenous peoples were supposed to regain their cultural identity and selfworth, tied these characteristics together.

The task of foreign volunteers in the NGO was to train indigenous leaders and community members in the importance of revalorizing their own cultural principles and beliefs. One example provides apt illustration of our work. In a seminar on indigenous rights that took place in a small rural Guaraní community close to the city of Santa Cruz, indigenous leaders and activists were asked to draw or write down their definitions of development. When one person in my group drew a picture of a television, I was asked to redirect him to think about development in terms of community values or indigenous traditions. The moment was bizarre: there I was, a foreign student of anthropology, telling the indigenous leader that his idea of development was wrong. Instead of perceiving TV as the symbol of development, he should rather cherish the ancient cultural and social traditions of his own community that lie outside the parameters of modernity.

In 2002, I became acquainted with indigenous development terminologies in a very different way. While I was conducting an internship on gender issues at one of the UN agencies in La Paz, I became familiar with how detached (or so I felt at the time) aid institutions and foreign and Bolivian development experts were from the local realities of indigenous peoples whose lives they were supposed to be changing in a positive manner. Discourses of indigenous rights and multicultural reforms were, indeed, wide spread but, in practice, they had either a marginal role or, when present, were dominated by technical development terminologies. Political issues that were topical in constantly ongoing and intensifying indigenous protests were bypassed by both national elites and the international development community. Despite important participatory policy

initiatives such as the PRSP consultations, the spheres of political decision making and policy processes were so controlled by transnational actors and urban upper middle class elites that no one could have imagined how soon those whose role at the time was merely to function as the object of development policy would be ruling the country.

When I was planning my PhD studies, my initial idea was to compare the rise of left-wing politics in such distinct countries as Bolivia and Nicaragua. I had worked at the UN in Nicaragua for a few years prior to the re-election of Sandinista Daniel Ortega and had visited there several times earlier, for example when participating in a volunteering trip organized by the Finland-Nicaragua-Association, a residue of the 1980s' Nicaragua Solidarity Movement. Prior to my experiences in Bolivia and Nicaragua, my interest had focused on Cuba, and I travelled there annually over a period of several years, participating in a Solidarity Brigade, and writing my master's thesis on the construction of gender and sexual identities within afro-Cuban culture and the Cuban revolution. Although I also briefly studied in Costa Rica and Guatemala, and have since travelled in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru, my long-term interests were in Latin American revolutions and social change. However, when I came across the term *vivir bien* on the front page of the new Bolivian National Development Plan, I quickly associated it with the idea of *suma qawsay* and, indeed, when reading the introduction to the new policy concept, I was convinced that there were many similar characteristics. I realized that my previous experiences had helped me discern a meaningful notion that would provide me with a unique angle from which to examine the Bolivian case; one that could easily have gone unnoticed by others not familiar with certain indigenous discourses. Due to my previous experiences in Cuba and Nicaragua I was also aware of the major differences that existed between these "revolutionary" contexts: how different Bolivia and Nicaragua were in comparison to Cuba due to the immense power of the global development apparatus in these countries; and how different Bolivia was in comparison to both Cuba and Nicaragua due to indigenous populations. At that moment I knew that I had to track how the notion of indigenous good life had travelled from marginalized NGOs, indigenous leaders, and movement activists to the core of a state policy document. As a person with background in social anthropology, I was fascinated to find out what happened when anthropological terminologies and conceptualizations of indigenous cultures started to circulate within wider realms of policy and politics.

Evo Morales was already a rising political figure in 2001 and 2002 but both my host indigenous NGO and the international development community were suspicious of him. From the perspective of the indigenous NGO, Evo Morales and the MAS represented peasant unions while the NGO's main interest lay in the promotion of cultural difference on the basis of indigeneity. When I and my fellow volunteers participated in the 2001 *Marcha por la Vida y por la Soberanía* (led by Evo Morales and his *cocaleros* and Oscar Olivera and workers' unions), we were condemned by the NGO both for jeopardizing

its institutional position and relations with the governmental authorities, and also for showing solidarity with what was perceived at the time to be a peasants' movement with different goals and interests than those of culturally oriented indigenous groups. Development agencies, for their part, either considered him a nuisance or simply bypassed him. In 2006, I was all the more surprised, therefore, to discover that the troops of Morales' MAS were now arguing in the name of indigenous good life with the support of both indigenous movements and development agencies.

## **2.4.2 How to Study Those in Positions of Power?**

During my fieldwork, there were various issues that had an impact on the nature of the data that I collected and, consequently, on my knowledge production. The first important issue is related to reversed power relations between me and my informants. Within the disciplines of social anthropology and development studies, there has been a wide discussion on the positioning of the researcher *vis-à-vis* informants in situations where ethnic, class, and gender backgrounds differ strongly. Wolcott has even suggested that “we typically deny any suggestion of our power and authority even when made uncomfortably aware of our advantaged status in the settings we study” (2005: 155). Less attention has been paid to situations where power relations between the researcher and the informants are reversed. In the case of the study of elites (whether political actors, public servants, or transnational development experts), authority and power tend to reside with informants rather than the researcher.

This was the situation that I faced during my fieldwork, especially in relation to ministers, parliamentarians, and some development experts. In relation to this, Marcus (2001) has suggested that in today's global world, ethnographic fieldwork often appears as a ‘theater of complicit reflexivities’. By this term he refers to situations in which power relations and the social lives of researcher and informants are more balanced, as they often are when studying experts, professionals, or elites of some sort (ibid.: 524). In such circumstances, ethnographic fieldwork appears as a stage holding a range of positions, interests, and motives that in many ways intertwine the researcher and his/her informants. Rabinow and Marcus with Faubion and Rees (2008) talk of ‘epistemic partnerships/collaborations’ and ‘mutual appropriations’. They suggest that “when the power relationships in the fieldwork situation are more balanced, or even reversed..., appropriation is not the bad word that it was in the postcolonial or neocolonial context of much traditional fieldwork” (ibid.: 66).

During my own research, it became clear to me that while I was extracting valuable information from my informants, my informants were equally using me for their own divergent purposes. This resonates with Hammersley and Atkinson who have noted

that a “fieldworker may well find him- or herself involved in varieties of ‘patron-client’ relationship with sponsors” (2007: 59). While new Bolivian state elites were reconfiguring their own authority, most of my informants were in an unstable and mobile social and political position which reflected their stance towards me. While I was trying to find a way to access important sources of information amidst political turmoil, so were many of my informants. In some cases, I realized that I was being used as a channel to ministries and to specific authorities. Through these contacts my presence as a foreign professional was being used as a source of legitimation for enhancing the authority of specific people in the eyes of others. At the opposite extreme, it seemed that some political figures established close relationships with me in order to find out what was happening both outside and inside their ministries. I wound up in the middle of all kinds of political schemes.

This was highly problematic and raised various ethical questions. My relationship with public servants and consultants had since the beginning been shadowed by hierarchical power relations between political figures and their technical staff, relations of which I was not fully aware in the beginning. Most political figures were new to state bureaucracy and were in the process of establishing their position and authority. Possibly because the state as a political field was so new, they were often critical of state affairs and traditional state bureaucrats, and discussed these contentious relations with me in a remarkably open and straightforward manner. Public servants, for their part, were often highly critical of their political leaders, yet their positions and status depended on these new political figures and at first they were reluctant to say anything but positive things. When I started to identify these tensions more clearly, I began increasingly to emphasize my neutrality and detachment from political figures.

Rabinow and Marcus (with Faubion and Rees) have written that “when you begin with experts, there is no tradition of studying their culture. Milieu, scripts, what the data might be are all less predictable. For this and other reasons, the research paradigm...seems destined to be immersed...in some realm of collaborative effort” (2008: 76). As I declined to pass on anything I had heard from one informant to another, I had to find another way to maintain ‘mutual appropriations’ between myself and some key informants. In a few cases, when asked, I provided some technical suggestions on how to include indigenous ideas into policy planning or monitoring. Although my policy contribution was extremely limited, it was one attempt to construct a more positive reciprocal relationship with my informants and to lessen the pressure for more negative, spy-like collaboration. Overall, my experiences in these political schemes gave me valuable information about the functioning of state bureaucracy and its hierarchies: I was amidst – and contributing to – power relations.

### 2.4.3 Differences in Class and Ethnic Positions

Another important issue related to my positionality had to do with my being a foreign professional with earlier experience within the development apparatus. For these reasons, I was often interpreted as a source of money, valuable contacts, and prestige of one sort or another. This had both disadvantages and advantages in the field situation. It soon became clear that many people who wanted to get to know me were most interested in the opportunity to propose a development project or some sort of collaboration. Although I underlined that I was not working for development cooperation, I usually listened to these suggestions politely and sometimes advised them on how to proceed and whom to contact if I had such information. I had easy access to development professionals and experts, due to my previous work experiences and contacts, as well as shared lifestyle choices and what Eyben, a former head of British development agency to Bolivia, calls “a similar professional, racial and class background” (2004: 61). In 2002, I had witnessed close relationships between the international development community and Bolivian governmental elites. In their vivid reflexive account, Eyben and León (2005: 109) recall those times:

The two elites, Bolivian and expatriate, were socially connected. We lived and shopped in the same part of the town, used the same sports clubs and schools, and met at parties. The global trend towards donor coordination and recipient government ownership helped reinforce these connections and the sentiments of friendship and trust that came with them.

Now it all appeared to be different, as development donors were clearly less visibly present in state affairs than before. My previous experiences with donor agencies helped me to observe and understand contemporary changes in the field of development. Despite the changes, I believe that the fact that many foreigners in Bolivia are still likely to be identified as representatives of development agencies (as I was) and that foreign diplomats and development professionals have traditionally enjoyed privileged positions, gave me a relatively (and surprisingly) easy access to ministries. Both Bolivian researchers at various universities and my informants within the bureaucracy noted on various occasions that local people would not have had same opportunities and access as I had. Reflecting on my own ethnicity and status as a privileged foreigner within the state bureaucracy gave me valuable information about existing transnational hierarchies and power relations in a context where ethnicity and foreign forms of domination have been thoroughly politicized.

Another issue related to ethnicity/power–relations that affected my ethnographic knowledge production occurred with social movements and indigenous organizations. Because of my previous experiences with the indigenous NGO and sympathies with



indigenous terminologies, I thought I would relate with ease to social movements and indigenous organizations. In practice, however, I was often identified with Western science and Western knowledge production that, according to many indigenous activists, had objectified and taken advantage of indigenous peoples for foreign researchers' own professional and economic advantage. Many felt that they had not gained anything from the continuous presence of anthropologists and other researchers in their communities, and that scientific knowledge was part of creating exactly those relations of exploitation and marginalization that the contemporary process of state transformation was trying to decolonize. Therefore, a few individual indigenous activists aside, my communication with social movements and indigenous organizations stayed at a comparatively superficial level and with these groups of informants, I was never fully able to "grasp the native's point of view", as Malinowski (1984[1922]) would have put it.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, along with other foreign anthropologists and researchers, I was accused by some non-indigenous members of the political opposition of romanticizing indigenous peoples in ethnographic accounts. This, according to them, had, on its part, contributed to the political rise of indigenous peoples and to the related transformation of the state through indigenous ideologies. The role of foreign academicians and NGOs in the political organization of indigenous peoples does indeed come up in various academic accounts and internal documents of indigenous organizations (see, for example, Gustafson 2010; Postero 2007). The question of romanticizing indigeneity was a valid one given my personal encounters with the notion of *vivir bien*, and it encouraged me to reflect on whether my earlier experiences have inclined me to place too much importance on it, and to interpret it through my own prisms. Webber (2011: 234) has brought up a similar critique of the romanticization of the Bolivian case among international left-wing thinkers and activists. I am conscious that the notion of good life is only one of many important issues (such as nationalization of resources, autonomy struggles, and the new constitution) and terminologies (others including, for example, decolonization, democratic revolution, and *chachawarmi* on gender relations) that could have been examined in more depth. My earlier experiences, however, provided me with a cutting edge position to focus on this exact concept within wider realms of politics and state formation.

#### **2.4.4 Gendered Encounters**

The third aspect of positionality had to do with gender relations. At the same time as contestations over establishing position and legitimacy in new political arenas were being fiercely waged, I too found myself shuttling among political actors and policy-makers in my own attempts to establish and legitimize my position as a researcher in this

highly volatile political situation. Although Morales' regime has attempted to promote the political participation of indigenous peoples, young people, and women, the state bureaucracy was still a very masculine entity. As a fairly young, foreign female, I had to think constantly about how I spoke, how I dressed, how I behaved; in what kind of places and spaces and at what time I should meet with my informants; with whom I could be seen, and so on. From those few women with whom I became more familiar within the state bureaucracy I learned that sexual harassment is part of their everyday experience. A female leader in one of the ministries noted to me that many women who had become politically active and had gained popularity in ministries, political parties, and social movements were suffering from sexual harassment and were experiencing the constant risk of physical violence and sexual assault.

In my own behavior, I tended to overemphasize "objective" and neutral behavior, a traditional feature of bureaucracies, although objectivity as a masculine and subjectivity as a feminine feature have long been harshly downplayed by feminist critique (Code 1991; Cook and Fonow 1986; Fox Keller 1982). I felt that establishing authority over, and control of, research situations, as mentioned by Ostrander (1993) with regards studying elites, was especially critical for me as I felt that I was being constantly "tested" on the grounds of my gender. If, for one reason or another, I "lost control" of the situation – that is, said something personal – discussions easily moved in more gendered directions. Obviously, however, there were also some advantages to being a foreign woman: access to male informants was generous and I also felt that I was not considered a threat to anyone's authority, explaining why many were very open and detailed about their views. Nevertheless, I often felt that I was in some sort of continuous power struggle. As burdensome as this continuous testing was, with its frequent gendered or sexual implications, I have since considered it an important source of data on how predominantly masculine state bureaucracies work. It exposed yet another layer of power relations with which I became familiar through my own positionality.

### **2.4.5 Ethics in the Study of Power**

Ethnographic research may raise ethical problems and questions. In my study, the main challenge was to make sure that the people involved knew of my status as a researcher. For ethical reasons I have opted not to describe some policy events and political meetings when this did not happen. Additionally, when discussions took place among larger groups of people in cafes or bars, or when someone was recounting highly sensitive issues away from the tape recorder, I have been very cautious about whether to use that data. This is a setback from the point of view of my study in that many informative ethnographic details and descriptions are therefore missing. Certainly, if I had chosen to make use of

this sensitive material, greater evidence on the differences of opinion and juxtapositions between different actors could have been discussed. Therefore, I had to find alternative ways to explain the route taken to my conclusions: for example, in relation to the centralization of state power. In consequence, I have rather endeavored to use literature or interview materials for which definite informed consent was obtained in order to portray such issues as also came up through participant-observation. Another major concern, related to this, is that of ensuring anonymity to circumvent the possibility of causing harm to my informants who were often very explicit on various critical matters even in interviews. In the case of public servants, development experts, and movement activists, I decided to use pseudonyms in order to avoid any kind of harm that their views might cause them in terms of current or future employment or political affiliations. Only those public figures, ministers and intellectuals, whose ideas and visions are well known to everyone, are identified with their real names in this study.

### 3 INDIGENEITY, STATE FORMATION AND POLITICS

In the following, I describe and explain the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of my study. The following chapter also serves as a literature review. The key themes of my study are indigeneity, state formation and politics. Other important concepts that I will tackle in the course of the study are related to social movements, policy making and power. These concepts guide me in the analysis of ethnographic data and link my study with previous research in the field. All of these concepts have been widely discussed within a range of academic disciplines – cultural and social anthropology, development studies, political and historical sociology, political sciences and global political economy – and, in addition to being situated at the intersection of various concepts, this study likewise operates at the intersection of multiple disciplines. Contributing to development studies, a multidisciplinary approach is here understood as the meaningful combination of different types of academic knowledge for the purpose of generating new theoretical and empirical insights. This study draws its main inspiration from social anthropology but also from other scholarly traditions that study political phenomena.<sup>18</sup>

Multidisciplinarity can be a minefield: when you move at the disciplinary intersections, and perceive their boundaries to be blurred, there is the danger of never fully grasping command of any of them: your approach may be judged too local or too global, too descriptive or too explanatory, too empirical or too theoretical. Yet at the same time, it can be extremely rewarding: you may ask questions that others have not asked, you may question what others have taken for granted; you may see something that others have bypassed. And this is fundamental for the development of academic knowledge production. In this study, I make a case for the utility of moving empirically at the intersections of local, national, and global, as well as people, institutions, and systems: in scholarly terms, at the intersections of social anthropology, political science and development studies; and, from a theoretical perspective, at the intersections of

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18 Relations between development studies and social anthropology have historically been tense and sometimes outright conflictive. Ferguson has, nevertheless, claimed that “so intimately intertwined is the idea of development (and its lack) with the idea of anthropology itself, that to be critical of the concept of development requires, at the same time, a critical reevaluation of the constitution of the discipline itself” (1997: 170). Therefore, he refers to development studies (or development anthropology) as anthropology’s evil twin. My personal relationship with these disciplines has also been a bumpy one. At the moment, though, I am convinced of the benefit of combining what I consider the best of the both: development studies’ normative stance towards global inequality as one of the most pressing concerns of our times, and the commitment of social anthropology towards the understanding of human beings and humanity in its widest possible sense.

postcolonial critique, postmodern Foucauldian approaches and political economy, as will be explained in the following sections.

Before starting discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework, it is, however, important to make explicit the role of theory in qualitative ethnographic research. As a spokesperson of traditional, long-term, fieldwork-based anthropology, Wolcott (2005) has suggested that rather than forcing complex empirical realities into strictly bounded theoretical frameworks, ethnographers should stick to rich and detailed description of the field data through carefully selected key concepts. It is indeed difficult to combine a theory or larger theoretical framework with the complex realities of ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, often progressing in intuitive ways, which is why ethnographers should “surrender to what the field observations actually reveal, rather than prematurely to superimpose structure upon them” (Wolcott 2005: 183). Likewise, Geertz (1973: 25) has intimidated anthropologists with the remark that translating ethnographic thick-description into a theoretical framework often results in too generalized and, thereby, empty conceptualizations.

Although I sincerely embrace ethnographic openness towards the unforeseen and unexpected actuality of complex everyday realities, I do believe that a systematic gaze in the case of contemporary Bolivia can offer us meaningful theoretical insights about state formation processes in the context of political turmoil in which indigenous peoples play a major role. I look at theory here from the point of view of Wolcott for whom “theory is a way of asking that is accompanied by a reasonable answer” (2005: 178). Likewise I follow Rabinow’s suggestion that “the point is to find ways to take conceptual work, put it to work in a practice of fieldwork, and then link that back to some kind of ongoing self-critical tradition” (2008: 52). As a combination of conceptual orientation and search for structure, I decided to opt for a balancing act between two approaches: my study is both ethnographically descriptive and theoretically oriented.

The first part of this chapter discusses indigeneity and argues that indigenous politics should be perceived as a combination of identity construction and resource struggles. I look at indigeneity and indigenous ideas as political alternatives through a combination of insights from Latin American postcolonial critique, anthropological accounts of indigeneity, global indigenous discourses and social movement theories. Although discussed throughout the empirical chapters, these ideas are most specifically addressed empirically in Chapters Four and Eight. The second part discusses policy making, state formation, and power. The first section introduces different ways of examining state formation theoretically while the second conceptualizes (indigenous) policy as a form of government through which power is generated and exercised. The third section discusses the de-politicizing effects of policy. Although emerging in most empirical chapters, the development of these ideas will be deepened in Chapters Five and Six. The fourth section complements the understanding of power as governmentality through the theoretical

framing of other forms of rule. The notion of discipline will be further developed in Chapter Seven. Introduced in the fifth section, the multiple meanings of the notion of sovereignty will be further discussed in Chapter Eight. The concept of politics is discussed in a crosscutting manner throughout the sections.

### **3.1 THE POLITICS OF INDIGENEITY: IDENTITY CONCERNS, RESOURCE STRUGGLES**

What is currently taking place in Bolivian political arenas, policy making, and state transformation is an ongoing process. As such, the contemporary social and political situation is complex, constantly mobile, and changing. Together with the increased role of indigenous peoples at the center of the Bolivian state, the introduction of the good life policy into state administration is a relatively new phenomenon. Therefore, no readymade theoretical concepts or frameworks exist for its analysis. However, various scholars have recently started to unravel the meanings and interpretations of the notion of *vivir bien*, both within Bolivian and Ecuadorian indigenous movements and politics (Acosta 2011; Albó 2011; Bautista 2010; Calestani 2009; Estermann 2012; Fabricant 2013; Farah and Vasapollo eds. 2011; Gudynas 2011a, 2011b; Vega 2011; Walsh 2010). Many of these writings concentrate on portraying the notion of good life as comprising indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews. It is also perceived as an alternative form of development. Throughout this study, I also refer to the notion of *vivir bien* as a conglomeration of ‘indigenous ideas’. With this, I do not mean that there exists a fixed set of ideas, beliefs and knowledge that indigenous peoples inherently possess; on the contrary, I refer to a conglomeration of socially and culturally constructed and performed ways through which indigeneity is represented and highly contested by multiple actors such as indigenous intellectuals, academic scholars and indigenous movements.

While drawing on ideas of indigenous intellectuals and movements that opt for new kinds of political alternatives (see Chapter Four), indigenous terminologies have been influenced by various branches of academic thinking and global indigenous discourses, policies, and legislations. The influence of postcolonial critique that has empowered local knowledge production in the Global South through criticism of the ‘coloniality’ of Western academic paradigms has been crucial. Anthropological accounts of indigeneity and indigenous identity construction also play a paramount role. Furthermore, if not always fully recognized, is the power of global indigenous discourses and international legislations in determining what is perceived as “genuine”, or “pure”, indigeneity. Finally, the importance of the contentious politics of social movements at the Latin American regional level should not be disregarded. Let us examine these four approaches in greater detail in order to situate my theoretical stance with regards their parameters.

### 3.1.1 Indigenous Ideas as Decolonial Alternatives to Development

Representing a widely shared view among *vivir bien* scholars, Gudynas (2011a) defines the notion of good life as an indigenous alternative to development; it expresses the kind of post-development era introduced by Escobar (1995). He argues that the concept is grounded in ethical, intercultural and environmental values as “a reaction against the conventional domination of utilitarian values, particularly expressed in reductionism of life to economic values and the subsequent commodification of almost everything” (Gudynas 2011a: 445). Consequently, it is “an expression of decolonial efforts” against Western development (ibid.: 443), because “the very idea of development itself is a concept and word that does not exist in the cosmovisions, conceptual categories, and languages of indigenous communities” (Walsh 2010: 17). It also represents a critique of Western knowledge that derives from Western modernity (for more definitions, see Chapter Four and Chapter Five). Consequently, Gudynas (2011a: 446–7) suggests that this post-capitalist alternative differs not only from liberal multiculturalism (Gagnon et al. eds. 2003; Hale 2002; Kymlicka 1995), but also from socialist traditions (Ramírez 2010) originating in Eurocentric political thought. These views resonate with Latin American postcolonial critique (or the so-called Coloniality Group) (Escobar 2010a; Mignolo 2005; Mignolo and Escobar eds. 2010; Moraña et al. eds. 2008; Quijano 2000; on the Coloniality Research Program, see Escobar 2010b). Much of postcolonial thought, critical of Western hegemony in the production of knowledge and epistemologies, has been influenced by post-Marxist and poststructuralist views (McEwan 2009). Mignolo, one of the main figures of the Coloniality Group, has, for example, been inspired by Foucault’s thinking on power/knowledge relations in his conceptual elaboration of the ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ (Alcoff 2007). These writings have inspired some key Bolivian thinkers and politicians, such as Raúl Prada (2008) and, to an extent, García Linera (Walsh et al. eds. 2006; see also García Linera et al. 2001).

What Mignolo (2005, 2008) means by the geopolitics of knowledge is that, in his assessment, Latin America has been constructed on the basis of knowledge and epistemologies of European origin, thereby producing and reproducing hierarchical colonial relations within Latin American societies and between Latin America and other countries via global capitalism. Knowledge production and resource struggles are mutually intertwined. Quijano (2000) adds ethnicity and race to the relations between power and knowledge with the concept ‘coloniality of knowledge’ whereby structures of political and economic inequality are maintained and legitimized nationally and globally by knowledge and epistemologies that are based on distinctions between indigenous peoples and others. According to these views, therefore, ‘coloniality’ is a major feature of both knowledge production and economic relations in Latin America with indigeneity at the center.

Scholars such as Mignolo, Quijano and Escobar see an alternative residing in Latin American social movements and indigenous organizations that during the last decade or so have become agents in processes that Escobar (2010) calls ‘epistemic/cultural decolonization’. While, in its more traditional sense, decolonization refers to the abolition of “the political control, physical occupation, and domination of people over another people and their land for purposes of extraction and settlement to benefit the occupiers” (Crawford 2002: 131; quoted in Smith and Owens 2005: 288), postcolonial critique departs from this view. First of all, despite early formal independence struggles and decolonization processes in Latin America (Slater 1998), “nothing much has changed in the world economic order since independence, in that patterns of economic power and unequal exchange remain more or less exactly as they were” (Manzo 2014: 332–3). Sousa Santos (2008: 149–50) defines postcoloniality as a form of recognition of the continuation of colonial structures and practices in Latin America despite their early independence from colonial empires. In his opinion, it represents itself in both unequal class relations and racial discrimination against indigenous peoples and other ethnic minority groups. This phenomenon has been explained through the neo-Marxist concept of neo-colonialism, used by such Latin American dependency scholars as Andre Gunder Frank (1967). It should not be forgotten that many countries of the Global South continue to be inserted into the global capitalist economic system in ways that enhance their economic dependency and allow foreign nations and global actors to impose agendas that favor foreign economic, political and military interests (De Alva 1995; Hoogvelt 1997; Young 2001).

While there is no necessary discrepancy between neo-Marxist views and postcolonial thought (Manzo 2014: 334), postcolonial theory expands its critical inquiry from the examination of economic exploitation to the problematization of power relations in a wider sense, including class, indigeneity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, knowledge production, and epistemologies (Bhabha 1994; Power 2003). Consequently, Escobar (2010a) and Blaser (2007) have argued that decolonization confronts two issues: first, economic globalization and the neoliberal development paradigms; and second, the ‘modern project’, which refers to “the kinds of coherence and crystallization of forms (discourses, practices, structures, institutions) that have arisen over the last few hundred years out of certain cultural and ontological commitments of European societies” (Escobar 2010a: 9). Therefore, an analysis of the Bolivian indigenous alternative to development requires an examination of the intersections between resource struggles aimed at overcoming economic exploitation, and identity construction on the basis of indigeneity and diverse knowledge orientations: that is, multiple power relations.

Most accounts produced by the Coloniality Group are philosophical and to an extent literary (for a detailed and profound ethnographic account, see Blaser 2010). Therefore, Latin American postcolonial studies have sometimes been criticized for their lack of



empirical rootedness and historical evidence (Alcoff 2007; Salvatore 2010). While Latin American postcolonial critique offers valuable conceptual tools for framing the conceptual and discursive construction of *vivir bien*, it falls short in the examination of the empirical practices of state formation processes. Escobar (2010b) has, indeed, suggested that there is a need to strengthen the empirical basis of Latin American postcolonial critique in order to better understand concrete processes of decolonization in such countries as Bolivia and Ecuador. The aim of the ethnographic analysis conducted in this study is to fill the gap. Empirical political realities in which new conceptual orientations are situated prove far more contradictory and contestative than is often portrayed in philosophical or literary work. Due to the lack of empirical precision, there is the danger that strong juxtapositions such as those between indigenous terminologies and Western development, Western knowledge and so forth may easily lead, despite statements to the contrary (Gudynas 2011a), to the essentialization of both what is “indigenous” and what is “Western”. One comparative advantage of ethnographic examination of state formation is that through the examination of everyday discourses and practices the analysis extends beyond simple dichotomies.

Mignolo, Quijano, Dussel and some other members of the Coloniality Group do not define themselves as representatives of postcolonial thinking. On the contrary, they make a clear distinction between the Latin American Coloniality Group and the best-known postcolonial critics, such as Bhabha, Said, Spivak and Young. They claim that, in fact, postcolonial critique is a colonial production that has emerged in English-speaking countries, that it solely discusses African and Asian cases, and, consequently, does not take into account Latin American specificities (Salvatore 2010: 335–6). The Latin American Coloniality Group, on its part, has been criticized by some Bolivian scholars as a new form of colonialism. Chambi (2011: 78), for example, has criticized that theoretical elaborations of decolonization take place within US universities and they do not make reference to early indigenous scholars such as Fausto Reinaga. As all Western scholarly endeavors are likely to be deemed colonial in one way or another, however, it is clear that the more empirical and people-centered the study, the more possibilities there are to lessen the colonial nature of academic knowledge production. In the case of my study, the notion of decolonization, therefore, appears as a theoretical concept used by Latin American postcolonial scholars to define the process of constructing alternative knowledge and epistemologies, an empirical concept used in the process of Bolivian state transformation and a methodological commitment to bringing to the fore alternative political voices from the Global South.

### 3.1.2 Indigeneity as an Anthropological Construction

Despite these postcolonial efforts, there are few empirical examinations of how *vivir bien* works in the practice of state policies and politics. This may be partly attributed to the literary and philosophical nature of Latin American postcolonial critique, as mentioned earlier, and partly to the compartmentalization of academic disciplines and the consequent lack of multidisciplinary scholarship. First of all, political scientists that traditionally study state formation and political regimes have not necessarily been exposed to anthropological research on indigeneity, and consequently, tend to frame the Bolivian case through Western academic paradigms. In the field of world politics, Hobson (2012), for example, has claimed that whether taking imperialist or anti-imperialist stances, much international theory rests on Eurocentric explanatory models that portray Western civilization as an ideal referent in world politics. Alternatively, such notions as *vivir bien* are completely overlooked, because they do not fit into pre-existing theoretical frameworks. It has been argued that “post-colonial approaches have been largely ignored in IR [international relations] given its state-centrism and positivism” (Smith and Owens 2005: 288). Postcolonialism is, first and foremost, a post-positivist stance; like post-modernism, it demands “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard 1984: XXIV).

Secondly, as explained in the methodological chapter earlier, there has been a lack of methodological tools among anthropologists to assist in examining policy making, state formation and modern political organizations. There has been a very strong preconception of what anthropology is supposed to study: it has been “driven by the appeal of the small, the simple, the elementary, the face-to-face” (Appadurai 1986: 357). While the political economy school of anthropology focused on states and capitalist world-systems, it largely did so from the perspective of their penetration of local communities (Ortner 1984: 141–4). Consequently, it has been the academic slot of the political scientists, economists and similar to study issues that represented modernity (the state, the development apparatus and so forth), while rural populations, indigenous communities, and ethnic minorities were examined by anthropologists (Sharma and Gupta 2006b). This compartmentalization of knowledge and lack of awareness of each other’s works is also known in the field of social movements research, where major divisions exists between case studies and grand scale theorizations (Edelman 2001: 286).

In anthropological theory, the Andean region has been strongly influenced by specific gate-keeping concepts that define what kinds of research will be conducted and what kinds of questions will be asked in specific geographical and cultural areas (Appadurai 1986). From the 1960s until 1980s and beyond, there was a strong current of cultural ecology within Andean anthropology that focused on the examination of vertical ecosystems (Mitchell 1994: 43). The so-called ‘vertical archipelago’, a term coined by Murra (2001[1956]), referred to the tradition of Andean peoples who use various ecological

zones along the Andean mountains, valleys, and lowlands for ecological and economic exchange; in a parallel manner, this system also determined the formulation of their social organizations and political institutions. As a result, contemporary characterizations of *ayllus* as vertical ecosystems, the harmonious adaptation of indigenous peoples to nature, and their supposedly ecologically sustainable lifestyles derive from this tradition. Another strand was a structural-symbolic approach, which was influenced both by Zuidema's (1964) study of the *ceque* system in Cuzco, and also Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and Turner's symbolism (Mitchell 1994: 44). This strand linked ecological questions to more explicit examination of Andean cosmological and ritual orders and their social implications for indigenous communities (Allen 1988; Arnold ed. 1997; Bastien 1978; Bouyesse-Cassagne et al. 1987; Girault 1988; Harris ed. 2000; Isbell 1985; LaBarre 1948; Platt 1982; Rösing 1996; Spedding 1994; Urton 1981). Meanwhile, similar accounts started to emerge of the lowlands indigenous minority groups (Melià 1988; Riester 1985a; Saignes 1990).

Many of these accounts portrayed an image of internally coherent Andean communities in which social organization, political-economic organization, cosmological order, and ecological adaptation created a harmonious totality – as if there were no internal power relations or conflicts. Additionally, as often occurred in anthropological research, these communities were portrayed as if they were isolated from the nation-state, development efforts, and wider economy; they were portrayed as functioning through their own logics, apart from external influences (Mitchell 1994).<sup>19</sup> In his stark criticism, Starn (1991) argued that by depicting Andean communities as static and unchanging, anthropologists bypassed such pressing issues of modernity as poverty, inequalities, and a longing for political change. From the 1990s onwards, political economy school and post-structuralist approaches largely overruled these anthropological representations in US and European universities (Mitchell 1994). Although anthropologists today commonly agree on the role of their discipline in contributing to the “essentialized construction of Andean communities as relics of the Pre-Columbian past” (Lazar 2008: 9), its legacy on the ground is still strong. During my fieldwork, for example, Bolivian scholars and practitioners referred constantly to authors such as Murra and Harris to give academic authority to their statements on what is perceived as “proper” indigeneity.

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19 Through applied anthropology, some views from structural-symbolic anthropology were brought into development practice: one example is the notion of ‘indigenous knowledge’. In the early 1980s, indigenous knowledge was embraced as a new development solution, because Western knowledge and scientific paradigms of development, such as modernization theories and Marxist dependency approaches, had, it was argued, demonstrably failed to bring development to the “underdeveloped”. It was believed that local people were the best experts on their own development because they had situated knowledge of their communities which was epistemologically different to de-contextualized, technical (and technological), theoretical ‘Western knowledge’ (Brokensha, Warren, and Werner eds. 1980). The notion of indigenous knowledge quickly became a simplification, an over-generalization of indigenous peoples’ cultures for the purposes of development aid; “a kind of quick fix, if not a panacea” (Ellen and Harris 2000: 15). The idea that there are two distinct knowledge systems and epistemologies that are inherent to being indigenous (or not being indigenous) was soon questioned and rejected (Agraval 1995).

From the 1980s and 1990s onwards, the concept of indigeneity, and identification of peoples as ‘indigenous peoples’, came to the fore. While earlier Andean anthropologists and historians discussed the Aymara and the Quechua and lowlands scholars their specific ethnic groups, they were now more commonly categorized under the common rubric of indigenous peoples. In another context, Hodgson has described this aptly by stating that “many anthropologists...have watched the people with whom they have worked for years reframe their long-term collective identities based on criteria such as ethnicity or livelihood to embrace a new identity as ‘indigenous’” (2002: 1040). Drawing on recent anthropological scholarship on indigeneity (de la Cadena and Starn 2007; Li 2010), I define indigeneity as a historically constructed, mobile and multiple term which articulates a set of positions and struggles. In this, I lean on Li (2000: 151), who argues that:

[A] group’s self-identification as...indigenous is not natural or evident, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous, realigning the ways they connect to the nation, the government, and their own, unique tribal place, are the contingent, products of agency and the cultural and political work of *articulation*. [emphasis in the original.]

Consequently, recent anthropological research in Bolivia has tended to focus in one way or another on indigeneity: indigenous politics, indigenous movements, indigenous rights, and so forth (Albro 2006; Fabricant 2012; Goldstein 2004; Goodale 2009; Gustafson 2009; Lazar 2008; McNeish 2010; Postero 2007; Salman 2007). Resonating with my own interests, Postero (2013), for example, has offered a recent anthropological reading of the Bolivian National Development Plan. My study contributes to this tradition of ethnographic research through the examination of indigenous political alternatives at the center of the state.

### **3.1.3 Indigeneity as a Legal Category**

The concept of indigeneity is sometimes uncritically lumped together with the concept of ethnicity or even with race. While as analytical categories both ethnicity and indigeneity can be defined as the social and cultural constructions of specific peoples that share certain common traits including ancestry, language, beliefs, values, and so forth, the term indigeneity entails three specific characteristics: first, it implies a shared global identity; second, it is normatively framed by international legislations; and, third, it is tied to the prior occupation of specific lands and territories. In comparison to ethnic nationalisms, for example, indigeneity, as Niezen (2003: 9) claims, has unique global contour:

[Indigeneity] is not a particularized identity but a global one...It sets social groups and networks apart from others in global 'we-they' dichotomy. It identifies a boundary of membership and experience that can be crossed only by birth or hard-won international recognition. It links local, primordial sentiments to a universal category.

While there tends to be rivalry between ethnic groups (and many violent examples exist today, especially in contemporary Africa) (ibid.), distinct indigenous peoples, such as the Sami of Finland, the Maori of New Zealand, the Maya of Guatemala and the Sirionó of Bolivia, all self-identify within the unifying category of indigenous peoples. They have collective goals and strategies that they plan and negotiate in international forums and meetings especially within the UN (Brysk 2000; Hodgson 2002; Niezen 2003; Tsing 2007).

This global indigenous movement draws its strength from international legislation on indigenous rights as the term indigeneity is not solely analytical or an expression of identity; it is also a legal category (Niezen 2003: 3), "as coalitions working at the United Nations and elsewhere have made 'indigenous peoples' rights' a part of international customary law" (Bowen 2000: 12). Global standardization of what indigeneity means is cemented in UN declarations such as Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (1989) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Although the ILO's Convention 169 explicitly states that its aim is not to establish a fixed definition of indigenous peoples, it does, however, set parameters by which the qualifications of different groups of people are measured in order to define the scale of their indigeneity. The convention (Article 1) concerns:

[P]eoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions...Self-identification as indigenous...shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion...

Instead of perceiving identities as constantly constructed and performed, discourses of indigeneity have become standardized. The key qualifications attached to indigeneity, therefore, include descent from original peoples of colonized or otherwise occupied lands and territories who, nevertheless, still retain parts of their distinct culture, traditions, and forms of organizing themselves socially, politically, and economically. According to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (WGIP), any definition of indigenous peoples has to include four criteria: first, priority in time in respect to specific territory; second, cultural distinctiveness; third, self-identification; and, fourth, an experience of discrimination, dispossession and marginalization (Kenrick and Lewis 2004: 5).

Li has remarked that in most international declarations and agreements, "an important

feature of indigeneity...is the permanent attachment of a group of people to a fixed area of land in a way that marks them as culturally distinct" (2010: 385). Convention 169, for example, states that lands and territories have a special cultural and spiritual value for indigenous peoples. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), on its part, asserts that indigenous peoples everywhere in the world have a "distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories...and other resources". This cultural distinctiveness gives them certain claims and rights *vis-à-vis* others in a situation in which the global economy is increasingly threatening their territories and livelihoods. Tsing, indeed, argues that "those communities that have placed high hopes in the international indigenous label do so because their land and resources are threatened by corporate and state expansion" (2007: 36). Indigenous peoples "sought international protection because they were poor and persecuted and because they lacked political access at home" (Brysk 2000: 9). On the basis of their prior occupation of lands and territories, indigenous peoples are entitled to lands, territories, and natural resources in ways that other (ethnic) groups are not (Bowen 2000).

An important goal in the identity politics of social movements and indigenous organizations has been to pinpoint cultural difference and distinguish indigenous peoples from others. A commonly used strategy in this has been to emphasize that, to a certain extent, indigenous peoples worldwide share common traits in worldviews, cosmologies, knowledge, and practices that are distinct from others. All over the world, indigenous "activists draw upon the arguments, idioms, and images supplied by the international indigenous rights movement, especially the claim that indigenous people derive ecologically sound livelihoods from their ancestral lands and possess forms of knowledge and wisdom which are unique and valuable" (Li 2000: 155). What Hodgson (2002) calls 'strategic essentialism', the use of particular cultural representations of indigeneity for political purposes, is evident in global indigenous discourses. Initially elaborated by Spivak (1987), the term strategic essentialism implies the idea that in order to get their voices heard it may sometimes be beneficial for marginalized groups, such as women or indigenous groups, to frame their political demands into a simplified cultural discourse. In order for many indigenous groups to qualify as indigenous in global forums, their identities had to be essentialized. These indigenous characteristics included, for example, the "natural" relation to land, respect for nature, value for community traditions, egalitarian relations between community members, and a distinct form of indigenous knowledge. This making of difference has become an important political tool locally and nationally and it enjoys the support of international legislations and conventions on indigenous rights.

Problematic here is that representations of cultural difference have often been translated into truths: they are taken to represent empirical realities of particular local cultures in specific locations, although this "fairly narrow, inflexible definition of [indigeneity]...

may not reflect the present (or future) realities of...indigenous livelihoods and lifestyles” (Hodgson 2002: 1039). To an extent, this essentializing of indigenous peoples derives from nostalgia towards inherently ecological and egalitarian human being that has been lost by modernity, argues Niezen, and continues that because of this romanticization, “indigenous leaders must struggle against a temptation to take both libels and outrageous flattery as the truth about themselves and their peoples” (2003: 11). My empirical analysis of discourses and practices connected to the notion of *vivir bien* examines how cultural distinctiveness and essentializing indigeneity is constructed through the notion of *vivir bien* and how they have been brought to serve political purposes (see Chapter Four).

### **3.1.4 Social Movements and Contentious Politics**

During the 1970s, social movements started to emerge as a theoretical object of analysis in social sciences. Due to extensive 1960s’ activism on the part of civil rights campaigners, anti-war protesters, student rebellions, and feminist and gay movements in US and Europe, new insights on collective action started to bypass dominant Marxist explanations that argued that social upheaval is a result of conflictive class relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Edelman 2001; Pichardo 1997). Two approaches to social movements emerged: one that dominated Anglo-Saxon social movement research and focused on resource mobilization and political process theories (see Tilly 1986; Tarrow 1998; McAdam 1982); and a second of European origin, but also widely popular in Latin America, that dealt with movement identities through the analysis of so-called ‘new social movements’ (NSM) (see Castells 1997; Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]; Melucci 1989; Touraine 1988). In the academic realm, theories of new social movements provided a break with functionalism and structural Marxism. At the societal level, they responded to the shift to a ‘post-industrial society’ in which struggles between labor and capital no longer played such a dominant role as they had earlier (Touraine 1988). In a way, the new theories “emerge[d] out of the crisis of modernity and focus[ed] on struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference” (Pichardo 1997: 289).

During the 1970s and 1980s, social movements had developed into a political force in Latin America as many countries underwent processes of democratization (including the instigation of liberal constitutional rule and electoral democracy) after extended periods of military dictatorships; these are conditions that Tilly (2004: 56–9) has demonstrated enhance the proliferation of social movements. In Latin America, these included church-based organizations, human rights activists, feminist movements, environmental groups, indigenous associations, and so forth (Slater 1985). Identity-centered theories became prominent when explaining “the processes by which social actors constitute collective

identities as a means to create democratic spaces for more autonomous action” (Escobar and Alvarez 1992b: 5; see also Alvarez et al. eds. 1998), though some scholars also leaned on historical-structural explanations (Eckstein 2001[1989]).

The spread of global capital and free market economies, and the increasing power of IFIs, development agencies, and transnational corporations were seen as major explanatory factors for the rise, and resistance, of new identity based social movements, such as indigenous peoples (Alvarez et al. eds. 1998; Escobar and Alvarez eds. 1992a; Prevost et al. eds. 2012a; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007; Stahler-Sholk and Vanden 2011; Vanden 2007). Brysk (2000: 145) has asserted that:

Indigenous political mobilization increasingly seeks to contest commercialization and shield Indian communities from market forces. Symbolic protest, civil disobedience, guerrilla activity, and transnational pressure campaigns target both the state and outside actors such as the World Bank and multinational corporations. Indian rights movements seek to persuade the state, gain accountability from international institutions, and foster links between the two.

This has to do with the realization that in Latin America, “unmediated market forces systematically reproduce ethnic inequality” (ibid.: 146). Indigenous farmers find themselves in unfavorable positions *vis-à-vis* regional and bilateral trade agreements and their ability to compete with transnational corporations in the markets is limited. Increasing transnational resource extraction and export agriculture tend to put pressure on indigenous lands, territories, and income generation, especially in the Amazonian lowlands. (Brysk 2000.) Niezen, for example, has argued that the “indigenous peoples’ movement [rose] out of the shared experiences of marginalized groups facing the negative impacts of resource extraction and economic modernization and...the social convergence and homogenization that these ambitions tend to bring about” (2003: 9).

With economic globalization and the withdrawal of the state from social and economic issues, “the centrality of working classes and the ‘natural’ representation of these layers by the [political] left ha[d] simply evaporated” (Munck 2000: 16). It was the “crisis of the traditional working-class-based labor movements and many political parties that created the political space for new social movements” (Prevost et al. 2012b: 6). However, due to considerable levels of poverty and inequality, the politics of social movements was never solely about identity concerns: although movement actors transcended the confines of the traditional working classes, and questions of identity were increasingly important, collective actions always entailed struggles over resources (Edelman 2001: 294).

In contrast to ‘old social movements’, such as left-wing political parties, revolutionary movements, or trade and peasant unions, they were seen to lean on less hierarchical horizontal organization and participatory processes (Hellman 1995; quoted in Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007: 7). Internally, they were described as open, nonhierarchical and



horizontal with rotational leadership and communal decision-making patterns, because they “attempt to replicate in their own structures the type of representative government they desire” (Pichardo 1997: 416). As a new political force, these social movements were considered to represent new forms of doing politics (Escobar and Alvarez 1992b). Furthermore, the non-institutional nature of new social movements has caused scholars to claim that they are not organized to seize state power, *per se*, but rather to promote specific, targeted themes of social justice (gender equality, indigenous rights, etc.). However, while this is mostly the case, there are also instances in which environmental movements have turned into Green political parties, feminist goals have been mainstreamed in political party agendas, and so forth.

Thus, while among new social movement scholars, and within anthropological theorizing of indigenous resurgence, it has been a common argument that indigenous movements are not organized to seize state powers but rather to claim self-determination and sovereignty through autonomous arrangements (see 3.2.5), the last decade has witnessed the political rise of social movements coupled with the election of left-wing governments in many parts of Latin America (Prevost et al. eds. 2012a; Webber and Carr eds. 2013). Despite this trend, an abundance of scholarly literature on the rise of Latin American social movements exists (Hershberg and Rosen 2006; Prashad and Ballvé 2006; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007; Stahler-Sholk et al. eds. 2008), but little research has been conducted on the role of social movements after their involvement in state bureaucracy and policy-making processes. The analysis of the relationships between social movements and leftist governments from the perspective of confrontation and co-option by Prevost, Oliva and Vanden (2012) has been a welcome contribution. Dangl (2010) has also written about the relationships between social movements and states.

In regards to the Bolivian case, social movement paradigms have dominated scholarly interpretations of post-millennium contentious politics (Dangl 2007; García Linera et al. eds. 2000; García Linera et al. eds. 2001; Mayorga and Córdova 2008; Tapia et al. eds. 2004). Part of the “new” in contemporary Bolivian social movements is that indigenous peoples are looking for ways to govern, not only via their self-governing territories and autonomies but also at state level. Social movements have shifted from contestative politics to governing the state power relations thus blurring state-society boundaries. So far, such notions as ‘indigenous popular hegemony’ (Postero 2010) and ‘states acting like movements’ (Gustafson 2010) have been suggested to describe Bolivian social movements in a governing position. More serious efforts to theorize the situation can be found in Webber’s (2011) work under the notion of ‘reconstituted neoliberalism’ (discussed more in detail later). Writing from the perspective of historical materialism, Webber (2011) demonstrates that political-economic conditions have not transformed to the same extent as revolutionary discourses, implying that when social movements attain governing positions, they may legitimate, or even deepen, the interests of the ruling class. Bolivian

activist-practitioners García Linera, Prada, Tapia and Gamacho have written about the role of Bolivian social movements in the contemporary state through the notions of plurinational transformation (2007) and field of struggle (2010).

While my first research plan operated at the intersections of Foucault's governmentality and political-economic resource struggles, I went to the field mostly inspired by the social movement theories so frequently used in contemporary academic accounts of Bolivia (Edelman 2001; Escobar and Alvarez eds. 1992a; Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]; Laclau 2005; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007). Yet I soon felt that, while important in explaining the political rise of social movements, such theories felt short when analyzing the contemporary situation in which social movements were already governing the state. While looking for movement activity in state centers, I found myself amidst movement activists, trade unionists, and indigenous scholars, all of whom were seeking to make sense of their new roles in a very complex situation in which the boundaries between the state and society had become blurred, yet remained infused with potentially explosive power relations. Contrary to claims of indigenous peoples' disinterest with regards the state, this study argues that the state, in fact, is an important reference point for indigenous experience in contemporary Bolivia. Contemporary Bolivia provides us with an empirical case in which indigenous resurgence and policy making through indigenous ideas have specifically touched upon the state. While social movements' theories tend to fall short in explaining this situation, Foucauldian understanding of governmentality gives analytical tools for framing these new state-society relations. I turn into explaining this in the following sections.

### **3.2 POLICY-MAKING, STATE FORMATION AND POWER**

When indigenous discourses become state policy, new conceptual tools are needed for their analysis. In political sciences it has been typical to differentiate between policy making and state formation as theoretical objects of study. In general, "state-formation is understood as a mythic initial moment in which centralized, coercion-wielding, hegemonic organizations are created within a given territory. All activities that follow... are then described as policymaking rather than state-formation." (Steinmetz 1999: 9.) Nevertheless, policy making and state formation should rather be considered as intertwined and constantly on-going processes in which structural features of the state are either transformed or maintained. According to Steinmetz, these structural features of the state include: "[T]he entire set of rules and institutions that are involved in making and implementing policies: the arrangement of ministries or departments, the set of rules for the allocation of individual positions within these departments..., the nature and location of boundaries between state and society, and so forth" (1999: 9). In this study, I use both

the terms state formation and state transformation. While I use the first as an analytical term with clearly established scholarly definitions, I use the second to describe and explain the empirical process of re-founding and decolonization of the state during Evo Morales' presidency. The aim of the term is not necessarily to imply that a major transformation has occurred, or that it has occurred in any unidimensional, coherent way; it rather tends to refer to political and policy discourses about change.

Traditionally, the target of anthropological research was strictly narrowed to “primitive, non-state societies” (Das and Poole 2004: 4)<sup>20</sup> such as indigenous communities, while the study of states and policy making were considered to belong to the sphere of political scientists (Sharma and Gupta 2006b: 8). This focus has recently been blurred by the emergence of the so-called ‘anthropology of the state’ or ‘ethnography of the state’ (Das and Poole 2004; Sharma and Gupta eds. 2006a; Trouillot 2003). According to Sharma and Gupta (2006b), the comparative advantage of ethnographic study of state formation in the age of globalization lies in its empirical capacity to examine how global processes function concretely in specific national and local contexts. Additionally, the strength of ethnographic research is that alongside institutional and structural analysis of the state it provides a detailed description of multiple and dynamic everyday practices through which the state appears as a set of processes and effects rather than as a neatly bounded entity separate from society (Trouillot 2003). Simultaneously, it gives a voice and provides a forum for the personal testimonies of those various actors who in their everyday lives as public servants, technical experts, and development workers are part of the work of the state. In the sphere of policy, Shore and Wright (1997) have argued that ethnographic analysis may disclose important aspects of conceptual and analytical shifts in development discourse. It can also shed light on how these shifts are made authoritative, thus revealing the nature of transformation and change that the political regime involved intends to undertake.

### 3.2.1 Theoretical Views on State Formation

During the last few decades, the legitimacy of the study of the state has been challenged both world politically and theoretically (Steinmetz 1999). The first challenge has been related to the process of economic globalization and the intensified global flows of people, capital, commodities, technology, and ideas over and across the borders of nation-states (Sharma and Gupta 2006b; Trouillot 2003). Many researchers have assumed that

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20 Yet Das and Poole have argued that despite anthropology's disciplinary disinterest in state formation, it has been “in many unacknowledged ways, *about* the state – even when its subjects were constituted as excluded from, or opposed to, the forms of administrative rationality, political order, and authority consigned to the state” (2004: 5).

global market forces, as well as the increasing role of IFIs, development agencies, and transnational corporations, would wither away, or at least seriously challenge, the role of states (Sassen 1996). Indeed, the increasing role of IFIs in national decision-making started to mitigate the “naturalness” of the sovereignty of nation-states worldwide (Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 296). Key characteristics of this line of thinking include the idea of deterritorialization: “the disintegration of national borders, and the demise of the nation-state” (Hart 2002: 49). While the state has lost much of its regulatory capacities in the face of global market forces, ethnographic scrutiny of global processes has, however, shown that globalization is manifested, constructed, and negotiated at national and local levels in various complex and mobile ways (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Hart 2002).

Recall, in respect of the theoretical challenge, Foucault (1980), who redirected the theoretical attention from the study of state structures and institutions to the wider functioning of power. This locates us in a different terrain to (neo-)Weberian or (neo-) Marxist understandings of the state that have been dominant within political theories of state formation despite rational-choice theory gaining significance over the years (Steinmetz 1999). Weber perceived sovereign states as holding the monopoly over coercion in given territories. For him, modern Western states represented legal-bureaucratic rationalities, whose formal organizations produce universal outcomes based on technical knowledge, the separation of political and technical spheres, and the compartmentalization of responsibilities at distinct levels of bureaucracy (Weber 2006 [1968]). Indeed, “for neostructuralists, acting on Weberian theoretical foundations, the capitalist state is essentially a benign set of institutions that can act on a more or less rational basis...and the repressive role of the state in reproducing [class] relations are obscured, replaced by an ostensibly non-ideological, rational set of institutions (Webber 2011: 190).

Marx noted in his early works that states produce and govern dominant ideological representations that reproduce capitalist relations (Steinmetz 1999: 13–4). The state, therefore, appears as an alienating, bourgeois instance, a product and maintainer of unequal economic structures and productive relations based on class domination. Therefore, class relations were to be reversed through working class revolutions which would provide total transformations of state and society. Webber (2011: 191) recalls that historical materialists:

[S]ee the state as maintaining capitalist order and regulating social contradictions inherent to capitalism, through violence when necessary. The state does this in the interest of the ruling class, economically and politically, in order to reproduce an inherently unstable and conflict-ridden social environment of class exploitation and struggle, which arises out of the irredeemably contradictory economic interests of the popular versus ruling social classes. Economic exploitation and state repression are built-in, constituent parts of the system of capitalism...

Rational choice theories' individualist and ruler-centered approach to state formation assumes that social actors "apply the standards of means-ends rationality, that they are self-interested, and that they are largely actuated by a desire for maximizing wealth" (Adams 1999: 100). This view has been dominant in the development discourses of IFIs and donor agencies for the last few decades (Boås and McNeill 2003). There is a large body of classic anthropological critique of the idea of wealth-maximizing individuals, viewed through the notion of reciprocity (see, for example, Godelier 1999; Mauss 2009 [1950]; Sahlins 1972).

All of these approaches differ from Foucault's notions of the state in which "one moves beyond the image of power as essentially a system of sovereign commands or policies backed by force" (Mitchell 1999: 86). While influenced by Marx, Foucault rejected the idea that unequal productive relations in capitalist economies would be the fundamental – and/or sole – sources of power relations (Jessop 2006: 40).<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, Foucault (2000: 59) suggested that:

[R]ather than looking for the single form, the central point from which all the forms of power would be derived by way of consequence or development, one must first let them stand forth in their multiplicity, their differences, their specificity, their reversibility: study them therefore as relations of force that intersect, interrelate, converge, or, on the contrary, oppose one another or tend to cancel each other.

This view reflected postmodern skepticism towards scholarly orientations that "claim to have uncovered the fundamental truth about the world" (Smith and Owens 2005: 285). Foucault himself stated that "the attempt to think in terms of a totality has...proved a hindrance to research" (1980: 81). Despite his criticism of historical materialism, however, it has nevertheless been argued that "Foucault maintained a sort of 'uninterrupted dialogue' with Marx, [who] was in fact not unaware of the question of power and its disciplines" (Fontana and Bertani 2003: 277; quoted in Jessop 2006: 35). Jessop has defined their relationship by saying that "while Marx seeks to explain the *why* of capital accumulation and state power, Foucault's analyses of disciplinarity and governmentality try to explain the *how* of economic exploitation and political domination" (2006: 42).

Due to its "how" questions, a Foucauldian approach is well suited to ethnographic inquiry. This is one of the first reasons why Foucault's view of power and politics was

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21 Because of his criticism of *a priori* assumptions of the importance of class domination, Foucault has sometimes been criticized by members and scholars of the political left to which he has responded by stating that "I think I have in fact been situated in most of the squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal, and so on...None of these descriptions is important by itself; taken together, on the other hand, they mean something... And no doubt fundamentally it concerns my way of approaching political questions" (Foucault 2000: 113).

chosen as a primary theoretical and conceptual framework of this study. It also fits with my methodological interests, because Foucault's elaborations on power/knowledge encounters have inspired Latin American postcolonial critique. While Foucault's theories have also been accused of Eurocentrism (a view I am inclined to support) (Clegg et al. 2006: 250–1), the theoretical impetus of the repudiation of absolute truth claims is that it opens up the possibility for alternative local views. Foucault, in fact, called for the emancipation and “reactivation of local knowledges” as opposed to “hierarchical order of power associated with science...[and] the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse” (1980: 85).

Three further theoretical issues convinced me of the utility of Foucault's ideas of governing and power. First, while Marxist analysis provides tools for understanding and changing external dependencies and exploitation, it does not explain how social change (or power) becomes internalized; an issue which I find crucial if social change is supposed to be maintained over time. The Foucauldian approach of governmentality, on the contrary, focuses both on external structures and internalized forms of power (Mitchell 1999). Because, for Foucault, power is everywhere, it helps us to see that indigenous peoples are not immune to it. They are not solely passive victims of neoliberal imposition of external coercion; rather, they are active agents of change with their own internal contestations, power struggles, and various hierarchies. Second, this understanding of power blurs the boundaries between state and society, thereby enabling an examination of the role played by Bolivian social movements in state centers that is free of the determinist dichotomy of proletarian-run society versus perpetuation of a bourgeois ruling class in the guise of movement activists. Foucault was concerned that the Marxist view of the state as the locus of class struggle was limited and, in fact, hindered the success of revolutionary processes. He (1980: 60) suggested that:

[A]mong all the conditions for...preventing the revolutionary process from running into the ground, one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn't localized in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed.

Third, Foucault's views of modern power through the lens of governmentality are compatible with the study of a development apparatus that has played a paramount role in Bolivia's policy making and state formation over the last few decades, if not longer. In the following, I will explain these views more in detail.

### 3.2.2 Policy as the Practice of Government

There are various ways to examine development policy, the most common of which – the instrumentalist and the critical view – are complete opposites (Mosse 2005).<sup>22</sup> The instrumentalist approach conceives of policy as a tool for solving development problems and affecting change through rational, technical means: it examines whether development works and what kinds of impacts and results it produces (ibid.). The critical Marxist view perceives development aid, and such related issues as the Washington policy consensus, as forms of imperialism, that is, “as a means of advancing the geopolitical and strategic interests of the governments and international organizations that provide this ‘aid’” (Veltmeyer 2013: 54). The critical Foucauldian approach, on its part, concentrates on showing how policy conceals its true operations – the spread of transnational and state bureaucratic power and Western dominance – in the technical idiom in which policy is portrayed. Furthermore, this perspective asserts that “policies not only impose conditions, as if from ‘outside’ or ‘above’, but influence people’s indigenous norms of conduct so that they themselves contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government’s model of social order” (Shore and Wright 1997: 5–6). Many ethnographers have been inspired by this line of thinking and have applied it empirically to the study of development policy in the Global South (Ferguson 1994; Ferguson and Gupta 2005; Green 2010; Hale 2002; Li 2007; Ong 2005). They have examined policy from a more empirical perspective, thereby emphasizing their complex and contested nature. This study is situated within this scholarly branch of thinking and research.

Influenced by Li’s (2007) ethnographic work on the relationships between development aid and indigenous peoples<sup>23</sup>, my study looks at policy through the prism of ‘the practice of government’. The notion of ‘government’ is here understood as a calculated means of governing and controlling individuals and groups of people in a desired way. Influenced by Foucault’s concept of government, Rose has described it as being constituted by “all those ways of reflecting and acting that have aimed to shape, guide, manage or regulate the conduct of persons...in the light of certain principles or goals” (1996: 41–2). State policy can be reckoned as a form of government through which power is exercised on

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22 Although I take here the stance most commonly known within social anthropology, development policy can be studied from various disciplinary points of views, including anthropology, global political economy, political science, and geography (Fforde 2009: 97–103).

23 One may query whether Li’s theoretical frameworks are suitable for the examination of the Bolivian case as she studies Indonesian grassroots indigenous and peasant groups. Due to global indigenous discourses and movements, as well as global neoliberal developments, I believe that there are similarities between indigenous experiences all over the world. Additionally, in the Indonesian case the indigenous term *adat* (custom) has started to circulate as the key concept in indigenous mobilizations and rights discourses in somewhat similar ways as the notion of *vivir bien* in the Latin American context (Henley and Davidson 2008; Li 2007; Tsing 2005). The article “In the Name of Adat: Regional Perspectives on Reform, Tradition, and Democracy in Indonesia”, by Henley and Davidson (2008), has inspired the title of my study.

individuals and groups of people. Paramount in this is the ‘will to improve’ (Li 2007); the idea of improvement and positive social change. The moral attributes often affiliated with international development aid fit well with the idea that “government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth” (Foucault 1991: 100). Development aid as a form of government appears as an assemblage that articulates ways of doing good. Through it, ‘positive’ forms of power are exercised. The ‘positive’ here does not imply positive development outcomes or impacts (in whatever way such success would be measured), but rather that it does not require the use of force or violence.

‘Government’ in Foucault’s sense did not refer to the state as a coherent and well-bound entity, and certainly not to specific governing regimes as sources of power, but rather to a conglomeration of techniques of power that circulate within the sphere of the state. The forms and effects of state power were rather to be understood in a more subtle way than as a form of coercion clearly identifiable to specific individual authorities or institutional or economic structures, such as bureaucracy or a capitalist economic system. Power appeared to be everywhere, because “conceived in terms of its methods and its object, rather than its institutional forms, government is a broader process than the relatively unified and functionalist entity suggested by the notion of the state” (Mitchell 1999: 88).

Foucault used the term ‘government’ in another sense as well. In this understanding, the notion of government was given the additional implication of a political rationality of how to rule and to govern; that is, *governmentality* (Gordon 1991: 7). Governmentality referred to the “ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this...complex form of power” (Foucault 1991: 102). It was, according to Foucault (1991), a typical form of political rationality for liberal Western states where ‘governmentalization’ of the state started to bypass other forms of power and rule.

What, in Rose’s (1996) opinion, makes (indigenous) policy goals or principles governmental, rather than merely conceptual or theoretical, is the aim of their becoming practice. What Li (2007) calls ‘the practice of government’ occurs through the translation of government into technical exercise through concrete bureaucratic programs and projects. This requires two key elements: first, the identification of a problem or a negative state of affairs that needs to be corrected; and second, an affirmation of what Li calls ‘rendering technical’, which “confirms expertise and constitutes the boundary between those who are positioned as trustees, with the capacity to diagnose deficiencies in others, and those who are subject to expert directions” (2007: 7). Important in the practice of government is the role of technical experts as knowledge brokers and gatekeepers of “truth”. Their role has been fundamental in the institutionalization of forms that govern and control individuals and groups of people, because “political rule would not itself



set out the norms of individual conduct, but would install and empower a variety of ‘professionals’, investing them with authority to act as experts in the devices of social rule” (Rose 1996: 40).

In addition to expert regimes, governmentality functions when individuals themselves formulate a type of authority. While the “government of subjectivity has taken shape through the proliferation of a complex and heterogeneous assemblage of technologies” (Rose 1990: 213), governing has become “something we do to ourselves, not something done to us by those in power” (Cruikshank 1996: 235). A key to understanding governmentality, therefore, lies in the merging of outside means of governing and controlling with internal processes through which individuals become self-disciplined and self-controlling (Kaisto and Pyykkönen 2010). Consequently, governing is both internalized and present in external – economic, political, and institutional – structures (Mitchell 1999). Rather than leaning on discipline and force, Hardt and Negri (2000: 23) define this as the emergence of the ‘society of control’. According to them, its main characteristic is that:

[M]echanisms of control become ever more ‘democratic’, ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens. The behaviours of social integration and exclusion proper to rule are thus increasingly interiorized within the subjects themselves.

With this formulation, Hardt and Negri refer to the idea that at the moment when power starts to overtake every aspect of human life (the condition to which Foucault [2000] referred to with the term ‘biopower’ or ‘biopolitics’), it “reveals a new context, a new milieu of maximum plurality...” (2000: 25). Because Bolivian state transformation through indigenous ideas is so recent, it would be difficult, although, of course, very important, to examine the kinds of biopolitical capacities that it might portray. While biopower and biopolitics are not the focus of this study, this line of thinking offers an optic for the study of the potentialities of democratization that new forms of (indigenous) government might open up. This internalization of decolonization, or becoming a decolonial subject, came up, for example, in the story of the domestic worker at the beginning of this study. Rather than looking at self-disciplinary operations among the so-called objects of ‘government’, I will shed light on the creation, and creators, of new forms of ‘government’ in a situation of major paradigm shift.

During the Washington Consensus era, the role of global and local actors in shaping the lives of individuals and groups in the Global South has been significantly enhanced, while the role of the state, on the contrary, has been in many ways challenged. In the case of many aid-dependent countries the practice of government operates through IFIs, international development agencies and NGOs. Fraser has suggested that in the age of ‘postindustrial society’ or ‘neoliberal globalization’, the question we have to ask is

“how does power operate after the decentering of the national frame” (2003: 170)? She argued that Foucault’s theorizations of governmentality were intimately linked with the specific historical moment of “the fordist mode of social regulation...at the zenith of the postwar Keynesian welfare state” (2003: 160). This study departs from the assumption that especially since the increasing spread of global free market principles and universal development paradigms, international development aid has functioned as a mechanism that produces government and control in many countries of the Global South including Bolivia.

In the name of ‘doing good’, principles and goals have been spread that, as Postero noted in the case of Bolivia, “rather than opening up opportunities [have] foreclosed options” (2010: 70). The phenomenon that Ferguson and Gupta (2005) call ‘neoliberal governmentality’, changed the nature of the Bolivian nation-state from a corporatist and centralized agent of productive forces to an outsourced government. Neoliberal governmentality functions through “all the processes by which the conduct of a population is governed: by institutions and agencies, including the state; by discourses, norms, and identities; and by self regulation, techniques for the disciplining and care of the self” (Ferguson and Gupta 2005: 114). One of the main characteristics of neoliberal ‘will to improve’ present in IFIs and international development agencies is their “increasing reliance on dispersed and marketized modes of governmentality” (Fraser 2003: 167). Hale (2002: 495) has explained the difference in these forms of governing in the following way:

While both the neoliberal doctrine and its ‘classical’ predecessor place primary emphasis on the individual as the source of rational action, and the individualised logic of the market as guarantor of the social good, they diverge sharply in the proposed modality of governance. Under classic liberalism, state interventions ostensibly are intended to ‘free’ the individual; in effect, they produce forms of consciousness that lead citizen-subjects to govern themselves in the name of freedoms won and responsibilities acquired. The neoliberal model, in contrast, puts forth a critique of this state intervention, and the social welfare state that it eventually spawned; its proponent argue for a reactivation of individual initiative, responsibility and ethical rectitude through other means.

Economic and development policy initiatives were crucial in introducing these “new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships” (Larner 2000: 5). After all, policies are major instruments of governance as Shore and Wright (1997) have aptly noted. In addition, Larner has suggested that while “neo-liberalism may mean less government, it does not follow that there is less governance” (2000: 12). Indeed, she continues that, “while on the one hand neo-liberalism problematizes the state and is concerned to specify its limits through the invocation of individual choice, on the other hand it involves forms of governance that encourage both institutions and individuals to conform to the norms of the market” (ibid.: 12). The corollary of this argument is that the development policy and practice exercised in

many of the poorest countries in the Global South have been intimately involved in the tightening of global capitalist political economy.

Consequently, the point of departure here is that while policy in the Global South manifests and enhances neocolonial dependency relations and imperialist exploitation (Veltmeyer 2013), it extends beyond that. It is an assemblage, and as such “heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial and situated” (Collier and Ong 2005: 12), that produces and articulates diverse forms of power and governance. It does not work solely through unidirectional domination and exploitation, but in myriad, complex ways through both external and internal processes; and, as a result, it has variety of effects and unexpected consequences.

### **3.2.3 De-Politicizing Effects of Policy**

Throughout this study I operate through analysis of articulations between policy and politics, power relations and critical challenges to them. One of the key arguments of ethnographic analyses of policy as ‘government’ has been the claim that it depoliticizes. What is meant by this is that matters of great political importance are turned into seemingly technical issues through knowledge and expertise related to international development policy and practice. In regards to poverty reduction, for example, Ferguson has claimed that “by uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problem of ‘development’ is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized in the world today” (1994: 256).

The process of de-politicization can be identified as deriving partly from a perception of politics among IFIs and like-minded development actors as irrational, self-interested, and rent-seeking behavior, and, therefore, as negative (Boås and McNeill 2003). This view of politics has been influenced by rational choice theory that entered into development discourse by providing the “intellectual backbone for the neoliberal agenda aimed at creating an enabling environment for private investments” (ibid.: 71). The de-politicization of development actions is partly a natural consequence of the mandates of IFIs and the foreign policy rules of many bilateral donor countries that impede them from intervening in the political affairs of sovereign foreign states. For these reasons, they translate questions of development into a technical medium: scientific knowledge and expertise are used in the elaboration and legitimization of policy guidelines, project documents, logical framework matrixes, and so forth. Important for the advancement of depoliticization are knowledge production and technical expertise because they, as Dreyfus and Rabinow have summarized, take “what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse, and recasting it in the neutral language”

(1982: 196). This “masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality is a key feature of modern power” (Shore and Wright 1997: 8).

Nevertheless, Shore and Wright have shown in their ethnographic study that “policies are most obviously political phenomena, yet it is a feature of policies that their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed” (1997: 8). Ferguson has taken his criticism even further by suggesting that while an important – if not *the* most significant – aspect of development aid is its ‘anti-politics’ character, aid is, nevertheless, often “performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object” (1994: 256). Although development aid is portrayed as a merely technical and non-political exercise, it is, in fact, a major player in the production and reproduction of power relations in many aid-dependent countries of the Global South. It has many political and ideological effects most prevalently seen in the restructuring of forms of governing, as well as in the spread of the free market principles of global capitalism.

Instead of being depoliticized, Li (2007) has showed that the business of doing good is part of a complex web of interests and relations through which people are managed, controlled, and targeted as objects of development in a way that delimits – but does not impede – their opportunities to question and confront existing power relations. As we well know, the most burning development issues are highly political because they touch upon questions related to the redistribution and control of resources and wealth (land, labor, capital), power relations of all sorts (ethnic, gendered, class), and inequalities at local, national, and global scales. Consequently, the rational choice theory view of politics as irrational and negative is not solely “simplistic and one-dimensional” but false, because it “fails to capture how politics plays out in a combination of struggles, not only over... resources but also ideas and values” (Boås and McNeill 2003: 71). In order to change entrenched patterns, political and economic relations require major transformations to produce the exact *politics* required for social change.

A counterpart to the concept of the practice of government emerges here: the ‘practice of politics’. While the practice of government was earlier explained as a calculated mode of enhancing the wellbeing of populations through technical means, the practice of politics is defined by Li as a critical challenge that “shapes, challenges, and provokes it” (2007: 12). Therefore, while the aim of the practice of government is to rule through the taming of political contestations, there is always room for critical challenge. Foucault’s suggestion that power comes from below is paramount in rethinking resistance as positive and productive in the construction of transformational politics (O’Malley 1996: 312). If studies of development policy and practice as forms of neoliberal governmentality have suggested that development depoliticizes, the case of contemporary Bolivia turns the observation upside down. Contemporary Bolivia presents a case in which new kinds of

actors, such as social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions (those presumably chaotic, undisciplined, and contentious masses at the margins of the state whose lives the practice of government aims to enhance and govern) have entered the sphere of government. Social movements that, through contentious politics, have fought both resource struggles and battles over identities have captured the state apparatus. It is in this context that the double understanding of power and politics as forms of rule and as the transformative potential confronting forms of rule is most salient. The empirical chapters that follow contribute to examining articulations between them.

### 3.2.4 Other Forms of Rule

While policy making is perceived to produce positive (governmental) form of power, it increasingly operates through the principles and goals of a global economic system that is based on immense inequalities. Development policy tends to be operationalized in contexts where other, more coercive forms of power tend to overrule the effects of the practice of government. Therefore, alongside the notion of government as a form of power, the notions of discipline and sovereign authority offer other analytical tools for examining how power works. What then is meant by discipline? Hardt and Negri (2000: 23) have defined disciplinary society as a:

[S]ociety in which social command is constructed through a diffuse network of *dispositifs* or apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practices. Putting this society to work and ensuring obedience to its rule and its mechanisms of inclusion and/or exclusion are accomplished through disciplinary institutions...

In Foucault's work, these disciplinary institutions included prisons, bureaucracies, and other institutions through which people are put under the constant exercise of rule. While government represents the productive dimension of power which aims at doing good for the conduct of people, discipline is about direct control, punishment and a negative relationship of power (Ferguson and Gupta 2005: 115). Unlike modern Western bureaucracies that, as expert regimes, entail both the practice of government and political rationality (Rose 1990, 1996), bureaucracies and state institutions in many parts of the Global South work differently. Due to the lack of governmental participation in such crucial issues as service provision, people are often more disciplined and controlled by the values and norms of their own communities than by the values of the state. In the case of Lesotho, for example, Ferguson (1994: 274) has suggested that the ways in which power works through the state do not conform to the model of a state-coordinated biopower as Foucault suggested is the case in modern bureaucracies:

The expansion of bureaucratic state power...does not necessarily mean that “masses” can be centrally coordinated or ordered around any more efficiently; it only means that more power relations are referred through state channels – most immediately, that more people must stand in line and await rubber stamps to get what they want. What is expanded is not the magnitude of capabilities of “the state”, but the extent and reach of a particular kind of exercise of power.

Instead of overseeing relations between people and things as resources for the political economy of the state, the state is associated with, and typified by, representation of the ruling regime and governing bureaucracies (ibid.). In reference to this thesis, Green has argued that in aid-dependent countries such as Tanzania, “government...is essentially about levels, about the staggering hierarchical intersections of those who govern and the governed” (2010: 21). Due to a combination of historical factors and external dependency relations, the role of the state in the Global South often entails more bureaucratic and authoritarian characteristics than those transparently aiming for the common good.

In the case of Latin America, the histories of state formation portray state bureaucracies as maintainers of colonial and neocolonial orders that have constantly benefited the already powerful (Dunkerley ed. 2002; Foweraker et al. 2003; Klein 2003; Vanden and Prevost 2012). Integral to this has been the maintenance of racial segregation and ethnic discrimination. In the case of Bolivia, for example, there is a long history of perceiving indigenous populations as potentially dangerous and, consequently, as targets of bureaucratic control and coercion. They have been drawn into state mechanisms through patron-client networks, corporatist arrangements and other forms of co-optation (Lazar 2008; Moore 1990; Morales 2012). At the same time, many indigenous peoples, especially in the lowlands, have been left outside the gates of the state (Postero 2007); for them, if the state has presence at all, it has represented an extension of bureaucratic rule rather than provider of welfare.

The third concept in my analysis of forms of rule is ‘sovereignty’. According to a Foucault-inspired understanding of it as sovereign authority, Mitchell (1999: 86) has claimed that sovereignty:

[C]onceives of state power in the form of a person (an individual or collective decision maker), whose decisions form a system of orders and prohibitions that direct and constrain social action. Power is thought of as an exterior constraint: its source is a sovereign authority above and outside society, and it operates by setting external limits to behavior, establishing negative prohibitions, and laying down channels of proper conduct.

In Foucault’s sense, the purpose of sovereignty was to maintain and to feed the power of the ruler over his territory and population; the use of violence and coercion did not require justification, because power was absolute (Li 2007: 12). In this understanding, the crucial difference between sovereignty and government is that while the aim of sovereign

authority is rule itself, the aim of government is the improvement of the population (ibid.).

In colonial contexts, sovereignty was often based on conquest and the monopoly of violence on the part of the conquerors (Mbembe 2001). In the case of contemporary Latin America, this understanding of rule is still relevant because of the history of *caudillismo*, military dictatorships, and tendencies for the personalization and centralization of power to narrow economic and political elites (Foweraker et al. 2003). Vanden and Prevost (2012: 108) suggest that:

[M]uch of the basic socio-political structures of Latin America hearken back to the traditional large estate, plantation, or mine run by European or mostly European owners who commended absolute or near absolute power over the masses of people of color toiling on their property. In this hierarchical, authoritarian system, the peasants, laborers, servants, and even overseers were strongly subordinated to the *patrón*. The difference in power, wealth, and status was extraordinary.

Although coercive in many ways, patron-client relationships were at the same time one of the sole sources of protection for the people, when states were absent or people did not have the support of traditional community organizations. This elucidates Li's remark that sovereign authorities "have often been judged good or bad according to their capacity to deliver well-being for the people" (2007: 12).

Li (2007) has another suggestion as to how sovereignty, that is, absolute power, works in today's world: transnational corporations, she claims, are today's sovereign authorities because they feed the pockets of individual corporate shareholders without consideration of the impacts of their actions on local people. She has argued that while IFIs and development agencies use the practice of government (development policy and practice) "by educating the desires and reforming the practices of their target population" (2007: 16–7), transnational corporations "select victims at their convenience and write the rules to legitimate their actions" (ibid.). In parts of South-East Asia, for example, the state response to the emergence of economic globalization gave rise to a combination of neoliberal governing practices, military repression and differential treatment of populations on the basis of ethnicity and race: a phenomenon that Ong (2005) calls 'graduated sovereignty'. Consequently, the actions of aid donors exhibit contradictory characteristics: while development aid may aim to transform the lives of aid recipients in the name of positive principles and goals, the operations of transnational corporations, business sectors, and other forms of North-South relations tend to entail more coercive and authoritarian characteristics that often counteract these principles (Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Li 2007).

From the point of view of understanding countries in the Global South, one of the main criticisms of the notion of governmentality can be directed at its application to Western

societies, which are portrayed as normative ideals of societal governance (Clegg et al. 2006: 250–1).<sup>24</sup> In this model, governmental rationalities and the practice of government are “less developed” in countries of the Global South than in “modern states”. Foucault himself stated clearly that “we need to see things not in terms of replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government” (1991: 102). While Foucault noted that disciplinary and authoritarian forms of power co-exist with governmental ones even in Western state formation processes, Li (2007) has argued that coercive forms of power tend to overrule positive forms of power in many countries of the Global South because of uneven capitalist development and global structural inequalities. Consequently, various forms of rule have emerged and become articulated: governmental, bureaucratic and authoritarian.

In the contemporary Bolivian context, social movements have also tried to elaborate their own ways of governing through alternative political discourses and collective actions. The question then becomes whether, and how, social-movement regimes can create other, more democratic forms of power. Can they liberate themselves from the neoliberal hegemony of expert knowledge regimes and bring to the fore alternative local knowledges and epistemologies? Or will there be a continuation or even deepening of bureaucratic and authoritarian forms of power that are so deeply inscribed in the historical construction of Bolivian state-society relations? How will they attempt to change the external political-economic conditions and enhance the internalization of decolonial values through *vivir bien* policy?

### 3.2.5 Multiple Sovereignities

The following theoretical framings of the concept of sovereignty are probably more familiar to social scientists. Although sovereignty has been defined in multiple ways, most commonly, as Brown (2007: 173) has argued:

[S]overeignty came to signify the autonomy and independence of the nation-state *vis-à-vis* other similar polities. Sovereign nations, in other words, were seen to enjoy an unrestricted right to govern their own internal affairs.

At its simplest, sovereignty refers to the unrestricted powers of the state to rule and govern its internal affairs within a specific territory (ibid.). In empirical use in contemporary Bolivia, the notion of sovereignty often tends to emerge in relation to struggles to regain

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24 Numerous criticisms have been directed at Foucault's concept of governmentality (see Clegg et al. 2006: 247–58).



policy and decision-making capacities on the part of the state *vis-à-vis* IFIs, international development agencies, and global capital.

At the same time, another empirically-derived meaning of sovereignty circulates. It can be argued that one of the central political goals of indigenous movements worldwide has indisputably been related to indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy (Bowen 2000; Brown 2007; O'Malley 1996). The origins of the notion of indigenous sovereignty lie in the history of relationships between US federal governments and Native American nations, as well as related experiences in Canada (Brown 2007: 175–6). Established as government-to-government relations, federal governments have various obligations to protect legally recognized tribes, whereas tribes are entitled to such elements as Tribal Sovereignty, right to self-government and right to reservation lands: these issues are all part of the discourses of indigenous sovereignty that have been globally disseminated through indigenous rights advocacy (Brysk 2000). Brown asserts that “sovereignty is reimagined as a condition of autonomy from other cultures and political entities – an autonomy inseparable from a hoped-for return to primal authenticity” (2007: 173).

The notion of self-determination has been an important part of international law since World War II, when it was first and foremost launched in regards to processes of decolonization. The right to self-determination on the part of “peoples” is recognized in all of the most important UN declarations and, from the 1970s, the concept started to circulate among indigenous movements and other minority groups that used it to demand rights and recognition from their respective states. With the shift from redistributive politics to the politics of recognition, and “out of a postmodern skepticism toward the institution of territorial sovereignty”, argue Henley and Davidson, “indigenous rights campaigners have stopped short of advocating separate statehoods...but they have [rather] called for forms of ‘self-determination’ and ‘autonomy’...within the existing framework of states” (2008: 819). Currently, Articles 3 and 4 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) declare that:

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development...Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

However, it has been noted that “the question of whether the right of self-determination has been recognized under international law outside the context of traditional de-colonization is still a very controversial matter” (Henriksen 2001: 7). The term has become a major source of conflict between indigenous peoples and states, and a reason why many states do not recognize and categorize indigenous populations as “peoples”

(Erni and Jensen 2001: 4). The political goal of achieving indigenous self-determination is closely linked to struggles over lands and territories and the natural resources contained therein (Bowen 2000; Brown 2007).

The term autonomy, or self-government, represents the concrete manifestation of self-determination. Indigenous self-governance also refers to the *de facto* condition of many indigenous communities when they practice self-government through their own cultural principles and their own traditional social, political, and economic systems, whether or not these have been legally recognized by their respective states. Throughout the text I also use the term indigenous self-governance in order to describe this condition, while I use the terms indigenous sovereignty and self-determination to refer to indigenous political discourses, and autonomy as a concrete legal and administrative term.

Although the goal of indigenous self-determination is based on the idea of confrontation between a liberal form of rule and colonized subjects, the promotion of more moderate forms of autonomy and self-governance is, surprisingly, compatible with neoliberal agendas aimed at reducing the role of the state in economic and social affairs. Many contemporary academics have drawn attention to the relationship between indigenous peoples, and neoliberal policies and forms of governing (Henley and Davidson 2008; Li 2007; O'Malley 1996; Ong 2005; Tsing 2007). Hale (2002) has argued that what has often been seen as an empowering act of indigenous uprising during the last few decades, is, in fact, intimately linked to changes in the global political economy; they have shifted the attention from class-based conflicts over redistribution of resources to struggles for recognition on the basis of cultural difference (Fraser 1997; Hale 2002; Postero 2007).

At the level of state policy, there has emerged what he calls 'neoliberal multiculturalism' (for Bolivia, see Postero 2007): a tendency to recognize cultural differences in the name of indigeneity. Yet this is accompanied by an outright neglect of structural inequalities causing the marginalization of indigenous peoples in the first place: "Since the culturally oppressed, at least in the case of Latin America's indigenous people, also occupy the bottom rung of the class hierarchy in disproportionate numbers, they confront the paradox of simultaneous cultural affirmation and economic marginalisation" (Hale 2002: 493). Fraser (1997) has phrased this as a shift from redistribution to recognition; an innate feature of the shift from Keynesian welfare politics to the era of neoliberal globalization. At the level of state policies, the politics of recognition of indigenous identity does not imply changes in the political economic structures of the country (Hale 2002; Postero 2007).

However, in the name of cultural recognition and cultural difference, indigenous peoples have been able to promote their long-term goals for the recognition of their *de facto* self-governance. In Latin America, these discourses have been prevalent to an extent that has led to the image of "indigenous movements as direct attacks upon the

so-called ‘sovereign nation-state model’” (Warren and Jackson 2002; quoted in Albro 2005: 448). Instead of the state interventions so feared in orthodox neoliberal doctrine, indigenous NGOs, organizations, and communities are disciplined to govern and control themselves, thereby encouraging a situation whereby “the state does not merely ‘recognise’ community, civil society, indigenous culture and the like, but actively re-constitutes them in its own image, sheering them of radical excesses, inciting them to do the work of subject-formation that otherwise would fall to the state itself” (Hale 2002: 496). Rose (1999) has framed this as ‘government through community’. Hale concludes that the effects of neoliberal policies enhance the political agency of indigenous groups, allowing them either “to respond to threats or seize opportunities” (2002: 506). Thus, even if unintentionally, neoliberal reforms have opened forums for social movement action and indigenous political participation.

Sovereignty is understood and used throughout the pages of this study in multiple ways with various meanings not solely empirical but theoretical as well. As part of the overall analysis of the notion of *vivir bien*, my analysis examines the contested articulations between state sovereignty and indigenous self-governing arrangements, that is, indigenous sovereignties.

**PART II:  
GOVERNING PLURALITIES  
IN THE MAKING:  
VIVIR BIEN AS A DISCURSIVE  
CONSTRUCTION**





## 4 TRAVELLING INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGIES: SUMA QAMAÑA AS CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

In January 2010, when Evo Morales was inaugurated for his second term of presidency at the site of the ruins of an ancient indigenous civilization, *Tiwanaku*, he announced that it was the beginning of an “era of *suma qamaña*”. With this announcement he reassured the audience of hundreds of indigenous leaders and activists that the governing regime was working for and through indigenous ideas. In this chapter, I examine definitions, meanings and the historical rise of indigenous ideas as political alternatives among indigenous organizations, intellectuals, and activists. Although it is acknowledged here that indigenous terminologies are profuse, and their use, meanings, and interpretations vary among scholars and even indigenous peoples themselves, this chapter focuses specifically on the notion of *suma qamaña*, an Aymara conceptualization of good life, as the origin of *vivir bien* state policy. There is a long political tradition among various Aymara scholars, movements, and communities to promote political agendas through cultural discourses; consequently, it has been argued that contemporary indigenous policy ideas are very strongly linked with Andean indigenous movements, and are, therefore, sometimes criticized as Andean-centric (Gustafson 2009: 277).

In the following, I firstly examine the historical emergence of indigenous ideas as suitable policy and political goals by investigating indigenous mobilization in Bolivia and worldwide, and particularly the links between the emergence of indigenous identity concerns and so-called neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2002; Postero 2007) that emerged in parallel with profound structural changes in the global political economy. Secondly, I examine definitions, meanings and interpretations of indigenous terminologies such as *suma qamaña* by various indigenous movements and organizations, as well as indigenous activists and academics, concentrating on those activists and academics who have had an impact on contemporary policy-making, either through their theoretical work or through active political participation.

This chapter argues that the prominent importance of constructing alternative indigenous terminologies is to enhance the indigenous political struggle for self-determination through autonomies and indigenous territories, a phenomenon that I call ‘governing pluralities’. Discourses of cultural difference and cultural distinctiveness seem to offer a legitimization for the very political process of constructing a discursive

and ideological vision of indigenous self-determination through territorial sovereignty and plural political formations. I am particularly concerned with demonstrating how deeply-rooted political demands (for example, claims for lands, territories, and natural resources, as well as the revival of indigenous self-governance) are represented through ‘strategic essentialism’. Although reflecting localized political struggles, these goals are not solely local to Bolivia but – for reasons that will become clear by the end of this chapter – rather related to the global spread of indigenous discourses and mobilizations as well as neoliberal global restructurings. A glance at the history of travelling indigenous discourses demonstrates that boundaries between local and global appear more porous and overlapping than imagined in state policy discourses highlighting the “purity” of *vivir bien* as a Bolivian indigenous idea.

## 4.1 HISTORIES OF INDIGENOUS IDEAS

In the following, I will take a historical approach to examining how indigenous ideas arose and were developed into viable political alternatives. The member of the Constituent Assembly for the MAS and ex-vice-Minister of Strategic Planning, Raúl Prada, told me about the history of the evolution of the notion of *suma qamaña* in the following way:

[T]his tendency of *suma qamaña* has to do basically with visions of indigenous intellectuals, and with visions of indigenous organizations. From both sides, from the point of view of searching for a new paradigm of thinking and from the point of view of its social roots, they start to construct *suma qamaña*. There are various sources of origin. Very influential ones were the *kataristas* in the 1970s...During the 1990s, this idea was worked upon from anthropological and cosmological points of view in some universities, among specific Aymara intellectuals...On the other hand, the notion of *suma qamaña* is also developed in the concrete fights and battles of indigenous organizations such as the CONAMAQ and the CIDOB. They started to construct their own political strategies; their own interpretations of politics; and their own concepts. Strongly linked to this was the theme of lands and territories. In the Andean highlands, this meant the reconstitution of *suyos*<sup>25</sup>, and it is in this reconstitution that the idea of *suma qamaña* emerged...

Although demands for the revival of the condition of self-governance have been constantly circulating within indigenous movements, it was not until the appearance, in the mid-1990s, of indigenous discourses of cultural difference that notions such as *suma qamaña* found an echo not only among indigenous activists in Bolivia but also in global indigenous discourses and among such global actors as international development agencies and NGOs. Let us look at how this happened.

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25 In Aymara and Quechua languages, *suyo* signifies region.

### 4.1.1 Early Examples of Indigenous Self-Governance

In contemporary indigenous discourses, demands for the revival of indigenous self-governance are widespread. Among Andean movements, many activists have emphasized the importance of the revitalization of *Kollasuyo* and *ayullus*. In the 1970s, Aymara scholar Fausto Reinaga (2001 [1970]: 304), for example, wrote:

What does the Indian have to do to become the owner of the land?  
To become a state. To become a Nation.  
What does this mean?  
It means that...the Indian state has to replace the white-mestizo Bolivian state...*Kollasuyo* belongs to the Indian, and Bolivia is *Kollasuyo*. The Indian starts to exercise his right to recapture (*reconquista*) his nation and his state...*Kollasuyo* is his; and has to be his. [my translation]

Comprising the present-day Bolivian highlands, *Kollasuyo* was one of the four provinces of the Inca state of *Tawantinsuyu* (Klein 2003: 17). Despite the conquest of the Aymara by the Inca state and the territorial spread of Quechua groups, the Aymara retained command over their own languages and large parts of their social, economic, and political systems as the region of *Kollasuyo* (ibid.: 17). Historical evidence of Aymara nations (*naciones*) exists from the late twelfth century onwards. By the time of the arrival of the Incas, there were at least seven major Aymara nations in the Andean highlands (Klein 2003: 13–4). Although contemporary Bolivian indigenous discourses often represent Tawantinsuyu as the ideal of indigenous civilization, historical evidence shows that to a large extent it was also based on conquest and patterns of colonization. Canessa, for example, has written that “tens of thousands of people regularly moved hundreds of miles to pay tribute in mines or cities, or to colonise on behalf of the state” (2000: 118).

Historically, each Aymara nation was spatially and politically divided into two complementary parts that were divided into yet another dual social and territorial arrangement: *ayullus*. These territorial units of Aymara self-governance were geographically and socially divided into upper regions inhabited by Aymara nobilities and lower regions assigned to lay-members of the *ayullu* (for more details, see, Klein 2003: 14–5). Each *ayullu* had territory in different ecological zones along the Andean mountain range that produced different crops and food staples (Murra 1978, 2001[1956]). Furthermore, there existed an elaborate system of economic exchange and reciprocity between them (ibid.). This ecologically and economically vibrant system was maintained through an exchange of marriage, kinship, and shared labor obligations (*mita*) (Klein 2006: 13–6). Inside the *ayullus*, political authority was rotational among male-female pairs (*tata-mama-jilaqata*) (Yampara 2001: 69). This kind of social organization can be perceived as an early example of “community-based participatory politics” (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 183). While in today’s indigenous discourses, *ayullus* are often represented as synonymous with reciprocal,

complementary and harmonious community life, historical evidence, however, shows that despite such factors as kinship ties, low social stratification, and common rights to land, class structures and governing hierarchies did exist during the eras of both Aymara nations and the Inca state. Regional chiefs and *ayullu* leaders had access to private property and they extracted labor force outside *ayullu* structures. (Klein 2003.)

The Spaniards (following the model of Inca rule) opted for a system of indirect rule (*encomienda*) that maintained as much as possible of traditional *ayullu* structures and governing mechanisms through the mediation of local indigenous leaders in order to control the abundant indigenous labor force and to save royal costs (Klein 2003: 33–4). Similar forms of indirect colonial rule over colonized peoples have occurred elsewhere (for first accounts of indirect rule, see Lugard 1922). This enabled *ayullus* to maintain a certain amount of territorial control and self-determination (Albó 2008: 23). To answer to the severe decline of the indigenous population, an increasing need for labor in silver mining, and the rise of a local Spanish elite, Viceroy Toledo initiated a process of *reducciones*: the redistribution of fertile lands to large estates (*haciendas*) and regrouping *ayullus* into *comunidades originarias*, that is, indigenous communities with larger permanent settlements and clearly assigned lands that were easier to govern and tax directly (Klein 2003; Postero 2007). This standardized spatial organization and new taxation system through species, rather than goods, effectively forced the indigenous peoples of the highlands to integrate into the market economy (Klein 2003). It also marked the start of a long series of land reforms that effectively destroyed *ayullu* territories (Andersson 1999: 7).

The Inca state, nor the Spanish colonial rule, were able to fully colonize the vast Bolivian lowlands (Klein 2003: 20). It was left to the Jesuit and Franciscan missions to organize the scarce and scattered semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers into fixed communities (*reducciones*). While these communities were relatively self-governing and autonomous from the state, it was the Church that functioned as a para-state entity: it utilized indigenous labor, provided evangelization and religious schooling, and imposed new authority structures called *cabildos* – systems that still function in many lowlands indigenous communities today and are considered indigenous forms of organization (Yashar 2005: 195, 205). Gustafson (2009) describes the autonomous arrangements of lowlands Guaraní peoples during the colonial and republican periods as ‘subservient autonomy’: traditional leaders entitled as captains served as labor contractors and intermediaries between indigenous communities, missionaries, and *hacienda* owners, thereby transforming the social structures of the Guaraní into hierarchical structures of indirect rule.

In addition to the *ayullus* and *reducciones*, a third group resembling today’s peasantry emerged in Quechua-speaking valleys, especially in the area of Cochabamba. Given the dislocation of *ayullus* into communities, social organization started to change and the number of *originarios* – a term used by the Crown to refer to original community members



who had community land rights as well as tax and *mita* obligations – to diminish. The number of indigenous peoples (called *forasteros*, or ‘foreigners’) who had no access to lands and no tax and *mita* obligations increased, becoming an itinerant underprivileged group who either sold their labor to large Spanish *haciendas* or performed free labor within communities in return for a piece of land. (Klein 2003: 48–9.) By the late colonial period, the majority of indigenous community organizations in Cochabamba had been replaced by landless laborers (*colonos*) on Spanish haciendas who gradually became an important class of small-scale farmers (ibid.: 61). With time, the peasantry began to be treated as tax- and rent-paying individuals with access to capitalist markets and individual land ownership, while indigenous groups were treated as collectivities whose relation to land was innate and culturally defined. Given today’s distinctions in Bolivia between *originarios* of the highlands, *indigenas* of the lowlands, and peasants, it is important to note that these divisions are not “natural” but deriving from historical structures of *longue durée*.

Initially, new republican governments depended on Indian head tax which is why they regularly renewed the commitment to support indigenous communities’ corporate land holdings and self-governing authority structures (Klein 2003: 105). Yet, as elsewhere in Latin America, liberal ideas started to take over from the mid-nineteenth century, with increasing amounts of foreign capital pouring into the country. Control of lands and territories by local communities contravened liberal notions of individual rights and property, and the capacity to sell land (Albó 2008: 24). Consequently, the Disentailment Law (*Ley de Exvinculación*) was promulgated in 1874 to privatize collective lands and to commoditize them (Mendieta 2008: 58–61). As a result, “ancient communities were fragmented as haciendas ‘captured’ the land and labour of entire communities” (Qayum 2002: 297). This marked the start of ongoing battles between liberal and communalist ideas in Bolivia that continues even today (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 95).

The rapid liberalization of the economy, the creation of the mining export industry, and the massive expansion of the *hacienda* system initiated a wave of indigenous uprisings. With the aim of (re-)gaining indigenous self-governing arrangements, these conflicts erupted periodically from the late-nineteenth century until the nationalist revolution in 1952. They included a movement called *Apoderados Generales* which consisted of highlands indigenous authorities who, from the 1880s, fought against the *Ley de Exvinculación* (Ticona 2003). Initially aligned with the Liberals, there was a massive indigenous uprising during the 1899 conflict under the leadership of Zarate Willka, who aimed to seize back the lands of indigenous communities (Condarco 1983; Mendieta 2008). With the rapid emergence of socialist ideas in the 1920s and 1930s, indigenous political fights started to mingle with left-wing political thinking. One of the first examples of combining indigenous and Marxist ideologies among Bolivian intellectuals was the work of Tristan

Marof, a founder of the Trotskyite worker's party POR (*Partido Obrero Revolucionario*), who had been greatly influenced by the thinking of Peruvian José Carlos Mariategui. He combined indigenous demands that lands be returned to indigenous communities by the *haciendas* with workers' demands that the mining sector be retrieved from the private sector and returned to the hands of the state. The first indigenous congress was held in 1945 with the specific aims of demanding land reform, rural education, and the elimination of forced labor (*ponguaje*). (Klein 2003: 184–5.)

#### 4.1.2 Kataristas' Ideas about Class and Ethnicity

During the nationalist revolution, (Andean) indigenous peoples were incorporated into the nationalist state construction process through such state schemes as land reform and universal suffrage and education. However, it had aimed in the long term to construct a unified nation-state by erasing ethnic differences. In fact, peasant unions “integrated Indians into the state as producers, not as Indians *per se*” (Postero 2007: 38). The repressive military dictatorships (1964–1982) that suppressed the COB and took over the state from the MNR, however, continued with, and intensified, corporatist arrangements under the so-called military-peasant pact (*pacto militar-campesino*) (Gray Molina 2003: 350; Klein 2003: 223). The state-led peasant unions lost their independence, serving as the co-governing popular wings of the military. Klein (2003) has argued that with the confiscation of *hacienda* lands by the state, the granting of these lands to indigenous peoples through their peasant unions (*sindicatos*) and communities, and the agreement that these lands could not be sold individually, indigenous peoples became a relatively conservative political force for decades, especially in the Andean highlands. Only the massacre of peasant strikers who had been protesting against decreasing wages, massive inflation and the elimination of food price subsidies in 1974 put an end to the pact (Gray Molina 2003: 350; Kohl and Farthing 2006: 52; Moore 1990: 45).

Nevertheless, a new wave of indigenous movements had started to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s especially among the highlands Aymara which, particularly the communities in La Paz and Oruro, had been less influenced by state-led peasant unionism than indigenous peoples in the Quechua valleys, where ex-hacienda lands had been redistributed to *sindicatos* (Yashar 2005: 166–7). Prada told me about the history of the evolution of the Aymara notion of *suma qamaña* in the following way:

Very influential ones were the *kataristas* in the 1970s. After the massacre of Tolata, perpetrated by Banzer's dictatorship, the peasant-military pact was destroyed...With that change, [indigenous peoples] returned to their long-term memory, anti-colonial memory, and they broke free from paternalistic relations with the state. From that moment onwards, they developed a political and cultural project through the idea of an alternative civilization:

the reconstruction of *Kollasuyo* and *Tawantinsuyu*. There is an interesting intellectual linkage not only with the Indian theorist Fausto Reinaga but also with anthropological constructions of symbols, myths, and cosmologies. This marked the beginning of the emergence of new concepts and paradigms.

Disappointed with the state modernization project and the imposition of peasant structures from above, mobilization around indigenous identity first appeared in La Paz among secondary and university students who originated from highlands Aymara communities. Inspired by Fausto Reinaga's (2001 [1970]) writings about the 'Indian revolution', these movements (*Movimiento 15 de Noviembre* and *Movimiento Universitario Julián Apaza, MUJA*) dealt with racial discrimination and marginalization that Aymara students and intellectuals experienced in their new urban environment and within the education system (Yashar 2005: 168). Although the nationalist revolution had produced its first indigenous intellectuals and academic scholars, paradoxically "these same changes produced an educated and vociferous class of activists with enough symbolic capital to challenge state ideology" (Canessa 2000: 129). Simon Yampara, an Aymara scholar and activist, who had migrated from his *ayullu* of origin to conduct studies in La Paz, explained his interest in elaborating the notion of *suma qamaña* in the following way:

When I returned to the countryside after university studies, I could not understand the *ayullu* with the tools I was given by the university. Class struggle, Marxism, socialism, capitalism, liberalism – they did not explain anything; people's lives [in Aymara communities] had different paths...The paradigm of life of our [indigenous] ancestral...matrix is *suma qamaña*, whereas the paradigm of life of the Western...matrix is development...

Yampara's turn towards ideas of cultural difference was, therefore, explained by the discrepancy that he felt between his university studies and everyday life in his *ayullu* of origin. Both Marxist class struggle, which at the time was an almost hegemonic model of explanation in universities, and state modernization agendas, received fierce criticism from Yampara who concluded that "capitalism and socialism...both derive from the same Western matrix". Reinaga (2001[1970]) had, for example, proclaimed that in addition to 'Yankee imperialism', Marxism-Leninism enhanced dependency relations through 'mental colonialism'.

These early indigenous movements came to be known as *indianistas* that promoted indigenous 'culturalism'. Their main message, which was also endorsed by political parties (such as the *Partido Indio de Bolivia PIB* and the *Movimiento Indio Tupak Katari MITKA* that, in 1979, succeeded in getting the first ever indigenous representative, Julio Tumiri, into parliament), was that the oppression of indigenous peoples was basically a result of ethnic and racial discrimination rather than class relations (Yashar 2005: 168–9). In the words of Reinaga (2001[1970]: 54):

The Indian problem is not the problem of peasantry. The peasant fights for his salary. His goal is social justice. The Indian does not fight for salary that he has never had; he does not fight for social justice that he cannot even imagine. The Indian fights for racial justice; for the liberation of his race; the colonized race...[my translation]

In 1973, a group of intellectuals announced the *Manifiesto de Tiwanaku* which was the first document that publicly proposed the reconstruction of the Aymara nation (Canessa 2000: 124). The document criticized progress and development brought from abroad by the state elite, asserting that a “development concept imported from abroad...does not take our deepest values into consideration...No respect has been shown for our...own ideas about life [*vida*]” (Tumiri 1978: 21). Additionally, the document advocated the independence of peasant movements from state control and aspired to have indigenous peoples’ own political instruments in order to “elaborate our own socio-economic policies based on our cultural background” (ibid.: 28).

According to Canessa (2000), the launch of the Tiwanaku Manifesto initiated a second phase of indigenous movements known as *kataristas*. This conglomeration of various “Aymara-oriented nationalist groups” derived their inspiration from Túpac Katari, the late-eighteenth-century, Great Rebellion indigenous war leader (ibid.: 124–5). Albó has called *kataristas* “an earlier incarnation of Bolivia’s contemporary social movements” (2005: 434). While they also drew their inspiration from ethnic and cultural concerns, they combined it with concerns of unequal class relations and the status of peasantry (Yashar 2005: 169–70). The role of indigenous university intellectuals was crucial here as well, but the main difference between *indianistas* and *kataristas* was that they began by creating their support infrastructure through grassroots peasant unions and rural indigenous communities (ibid.: 169, 171). Signs of indigeneity, such as indigenous community decision-making patterns, the indigenous flag *wiphala* (on the cover page of this book), and Túpac Katari’s slogan “*volveré y seré millones*” were built upon and combined with peasant discourses (Albó 2008: 38).

The first peasant union CSUTCB, independent of state control, was founded in 1979 (Canessa 2000: 127). Its political program focused both on economic improvements in the lives of peasants, and on the liberation of indigenous *naciones* (Albó 2008: 39–40). The second political thesis of the CSUTCB, launched in 1983, introduced the concept of plurinationalism as a political discourse. As its main political goal it stated:

We want total liberation and construction of the *plurinational society* which maintains national unity but also combines and develops the diversity of Aymara, Quechua, Tupí-Guaraní, Ayoréode, and other *nations*. There cannot be a true liberation unless the plurinational diversity of our country and diverse forms of self-governance by our peoples are respected. [quoted in Albó 2008: 40; emphasis added]

As can be seen here, today’s policy discourses concerning indigenous nations and self-

governance have a long historical background in indigenous and peasant movements like *indianistas* and *kataristas*. But how did they enter the sphere of the state? The important role that has been played in this by global indigenous discourses and neoliberal restructurings is addressed in the next two sections.

#### 4.1.3 The Global Flow of Indigenous Ideas

Niezen has reminded us that, as a result of histories of conquest, “relations between indigenous peoples and colonial powers have always been international” (2003: 30). Nevertheless, international networking and activism on indigenous issues increased significantly after World War II with the establishment of international forums, such as the UN system, and international legislations, such as human rights conventions. Important international networking developed, for example, between Mexican activists<sup>26</sup> and the US Red Power movement in the 1960s on the basis of the notion of pluriethnic autonomy, and between indigenous groups in Canada and New Zealand in the 1970s over questions of indigenous sovereignty (Tsing 2007: 40). International networking within the UN and NGOs has provided indigenous peoples with arenas in which to deal with, and to promote, issues that have been neglected by their respective nation-states (Brysk 2000). Indigenous political goals of sovereignty and self-determination, as well as notions of indigenous law, collective rights, and cultural difference, have proved difficult to handle for many nation-states because they stand against many modern norms, such as liberal democracy, constitutional uniformity, and the sovereignty of the nation-state (Niezen 2003: 16–7). When states have failed them, indigenous peoples worldwide have become ever more mobilized into “an interconnected web of locally-based mobilizations, marches, and grassroots activities, and globally organized debates, advocacy, and policy-making in international forums and global arenas” (Ranta-Owusu 2010a: 28).

In Bolivia, *kataristas* were supported by many INGOs, such as Oxfam GB, Oxfam USA, NOVIB, and Bread for the World (Yashar 2005: 175). Specific organizations and cultural centers within the *katarista* movement participated actively in international forums, such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), which was the first international indigenous peoples’ organization to be granted NGO status by the Economic and Social Council of the UN in 1974 (for the work of Bolivian delegates, see Tumiri 1978: 52–5). The role of foreign anthropologists in the promotion of indigenous affairs has also been prominent. Earlier I referred to Prada’s view that alongside *kataristas*, the emergence of the

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26 Tsing notes that “Mexican voices have joined other Latin American struggles to transform *mestizaje* and modernization into political autonomy and cultural self-determination” (2007: 40). In other words, Mexican indigenous thinking and movements have been influential in the spread of indigenous ideas all over Latin America.

notion of *suma qamaña* had been strongly influenced by anthropological formulations of indigenous worldviews and cosmologies. According to Li, “anthropologists have promoted strong concepts of community, indigeneity, race, and cultural difference, especially when these appeared to have strategic value in advancing an agenda they support” (2010: 399). Some hints of the early alignment of anthropologists in the Bolivian ‘Indian liberation’ can be found in a collection of *katarista* manifestos containing one of the statements made by anthropologists at the First Meeting of Anthropologists in the Andean Region, held in 1975. It states that anthropologists should support indigenous political goals by providing studies of their cultural values which would enhance indigenous struggles to obtain “their systems of self-government [and] the ownership of each Indian community and its territory” (Tumiri 1978: 4).

The case of indigenous movements in the Bolivian lowlands represents the clearest example of the influence and significance of international networks for indigenous political mobilization against their respective nation-states. Until the nationalist revolution, most indigenous groups in the lowlands had retained relatively strong autonomy and self-governance *vis-à-vis* the Bolivian state (Gustafson 2009; Postero 2007; Yashar 2005). With what Yashar (2005) calls a ‘corporatist citizenship regime’, the situation changed because “the state sought to capture the Amazon – both to defuse land pressures in the Andes and to promote grand scale development” (2005: 194). While the state had brought Andean indigenous peoples into corporatist arrangements with the state through land reform and peasant unionism, lowlands indigenous peoples were still largely perceived as primitives and, consequently, as wards of the state (ibid.: 193–4).

The most serious threat to lowlands indigenous geographic spaces, and the access of their inhabitants to natural resources such as water, animals, and forest products, was posed by the Colonization Law (1966). It massively increased both the migration of poor peasants (*colonos*) from the Andean highlands to the valleys and lowlands, such as the Yungas and the Chapare where land was more abundant, and the increase of large-scale landowners especially in Santa Cruz and Beni (Yashar 2005: 194–5). The CSCB, one of the backbones of Morales’ contemporary regime, was founded in 1971 as the union movement of *colonizadores*, peasants who had migrated in search of land and new forms of income generation, such as that provided by the production of coca (Albó 2008: 57).<sup>27</sup> The challenge that the process of colonization posed, and still poses, to local indigenous autonomy has been a source of continuous tensions between the state, peasant migrants and local indigenous groups for decades (a contemporary example of this is the case of TIPNIS discussed in Chapter Eight).

By opening the Amazonian lands to colonization, previously marginalized areas

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27 The CSCB was initially aligned to the COB and it never submitted to the military-peasant pact (Albó 2008: 57). It changed its name to *Confederación de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia* (CSCIB) in 2010.

and livelihoods were more intimately drawn into global processes. One of these was the cocaine trade and another was large scale capitalist development in the lowlands, which enjoyed lavish economic support from the US (Moore 1990). A new lowlands elite began to appear as “*ex-hacendados* from the highlands whose lands had been appropriated in the agrarian reform, mining families with compensation money from the nationalization of the mines, and all kinds of wealthy speculators made lucrative investments in sugar and cotton cultivation” (Postero 2007: 47–8). During the 1970s, a massive amount of capital was transferred from military dictators to new regional elites engaged in agribusiness (Crabtree 2005: 49). However, it was the 1980s that saw the aggressive penetration of loggers, ranchers, transnational corporations engaged in agribusiness (mainly soya) and the oil and gas industries into indigenous lands. These developments posed threats to the livelihoods and cultural traditions of Amazonian indigenous peoples, and led to their further displacement from ancient lands and territories. (Yashar 2005: 195.)

In response, the CIDOB (today called *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*) was founded in 1982 to act as the confederation of indigenous peoples in the Amazonas, Chaco, and Santa Cruz. When the CIDOB was founded, it was the first Bolivian indigenous organization to deploy discourses that were primarily based on indigeneity. The creation of CIDOB was supported by a group of anthropologists (led by German anthropologist Jürgen Riester) and sociologists working for *Apoyo para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano* (APCOB), an NGO that drew its inspiration from the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDSEP), an Amazonian indigenous organization in Peru (Albó 2008: 41; Postero 2007: 49). Research activities on the part of the APCOB were directed at promoting indigenous peoples’ political activism on the basis of their own socio-cultural beliefs, customary law, authority structures, and ethnic identities (Yashar 2005: 201). Another NGO working in the region was *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado* (CIPCA)<sup>28</sup>, which, despite its initial commitment to assisting indigenous causes through peasant unions, later started to support the organization of lowlands Guaraní peoples through indigenous authority structures. During the 1980s, the CIDOB was inspired by the Ecuadorian CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*) and it tried to initiate similar coordination and cooperation between indigenous peoples in the Bolivian Andes and the Amazonas; until the massive 1990 March for Territory and Dignity (*Marcha por Territorio*

28 In its early stages during the 1970s, CIPCA provided radio programs, education, and networking capacities to highlands Aymara peoples, and offered a hospitable environment for many notable *katarista* activists, such as later Vice-President Victor Hugo Cárdenas. Its origin in peasant traditions was visible in its early work among Bolivian lowlands indigenous peoples with a focus on production, class relations, and union structures, but later CIPCA combined these ideas with cultural notes (on CIPCA, see, Yashar 2005: 174, 201). In the lowlands, the CIPCA projects that combined Guaraní spiritual beliefs and explicit liberation theology helped to raise a generation of new indigenous leaders through a “Catholic-Guaraní consciousness raising project” (Gustafson 2009: 156).



y *Dignidad*), however, these attempts failed (Yashar 2005: 202).

The indigenous march from the Amazonas to the capital La Paz was a result of indigenous peoples' struggles against the aggressive invasion by logging companies in the Bosque de Chimanes; by cattle-ranchers in the Isiboro Securé and among the Sirionó indigenes; and by colonizers in the Isiboro-Securé, the very same location of today's TIPNIS conflict (Yashar 2005: 210). What unified the often internally conflictive Amazonian and lowlands groups was the defense of their own lands and territories in the face of transnational and peasant colonizers (Riester 1985b). Eventually, the CSUTCB joined the CIDOB on the march, marking the first time when all indigenous groups were united in their political cause and when lowlands indigenous peoples took a place in national political imaginaries (Postero 2007: 49). The demands made by the CIDOB of the state included first and foremost the recognition of, and rights to, indigenous territories and lands, but also to organizational autonomy, self-governance, and customary law (Yashar 2005: 203, 215). As a result, by presidential decree, Paz Zamora granted seven indigenous territories to lowlands indigenous peoples (Postero 2007: 49).

Among the highlands Aymara, a similar organization based on indigenous discourses and political demands on the basis of cultural difference was founded in 1997: the *Consejo Nacional de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyo* (CONAMAQ). In comparison to the lowlands, the historical situation with regards highland indigenous populations had differed due to the stronger impacts of agrarian reforms and peasant unionism. During the period of land reform (1953), feudal debt servitude was abolished and the collective properties of some indigenous communities were partly restored (Morales 2012: 579). However, major conflicts over lands emerged between those communities that maintained parts of *ayullu* traditions and those ex-hacienda lands that were redistributed to peasant unions (Albó 2008; Andersson 1999; Yampara 2001). During the late 1980s and especially the 1990s, when Bolivia experienced a sudden proliferation of indigenous affairs in state reforms, various local movements emerged in the Andes to re-vitalize demands for territorial self-governance and plural forms of traditional authority structures. One of the major promoters of this cultural turn was the research collective and NGO, *Taller de Historia Oral Andina* (THOA) (Albó 2008; Stephenson 2002; Yashar 2005). It comprised many of those Aymara intellectuals who, as youngsters, had organized themselves in the MUJA student organization and MITKA political party (Stephenson 2002: 105). For them, the main aim was the "reconstitution of the *ayullu* as political act of decolonization" (ibid.: 111). In addition to THOA, various Aymara, Quechua and Uru communities had started to congregate in the 1990s in order to re-establish *ayullus* as original indigenous nations (García Linera et al. 2008) – as "egalitarian and Pre-columbian kin-based and collectively owned territorial space" (Fabricant 2013: 164). The principal goal of the CONAMAQ was to coordinate these efforts. The THOA, as well as the CONAMAQ, was supported in its inventing of indigenous cultural difference by development agencies and NGOs



including OXFAM América, IBIS, DANIDA, the Inter-American Foundation, and *Fondo Indígena* (Albó 2008: 55; Stephenson 2002: 110; Yashar 2005: 188). Indigenous culturalist tendencies had become more attractive than peasant ones due to new global and state interest in indigenous discourses, an issue to which I turn next.

#### **4.1.4 Neoliberal Multiculturalism: Indigenous Policy Reforms in the 1990s**

During the 1990s, amidst major neoliberal restructuring of the Bolivian economy and state, indigenous issues came to fore in state reforms. The introduction of the global free market economy has coincided with the upsurge of identity concerns worldwide (Appadurai 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Trouillot 2003). The year 1993 was named the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, while the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples started in 1994. An important regional culmination point for indigenous peoples in Latin America was the celebration of 500 years of resistance to colonialism and conquest in 1992 which, in Bolivia, sparked initiatives encouraging international networking and national political participation (Healey 2009). During the same year, the Guatemalan Maya leader Rigoberta Menchú was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize (Prevost et al. 2012b: 5). In Bolivia, the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity that unified the indigenous peoples of the lowlands and highlands for the first time, brought major national and global pressures for the Bolivian governing regimes (Postero 2007: 49). In response, Bolivia was one of the first countries in world to adopt ILO Convention 169 on indigenous rights in 1991 (ibid.: 51).

Concerns for what Gray Molina (2003: 355) has termed 'pluri-multi politics' and the construction of the 'pluri-multi nation' started to circulate within mainstream politics. In the 1993 presidential campaign, the presidential candidate for the MNR, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, referred to Bolivia as the "nation of nations" thereby responding to indigenous demands for plurinationalism (Albó 1994: 56; quoted in Canessa 2000: 128). When elected, he chose, as the first indigenous vice-president of the country, Victor Hugo Cárdenas, the leader and parliamentarian of the CSUTCB-influenced *katarista* political party *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari de Liberación* (MRTKL) that combined elements of indigenous culturalism and peasant unionism. Instigated by Vice-President Cárdenas, *katarista* ideas of a plurinational state were inserted into state affairs although the *katarista* movement itself had split into numerous small and insignificant movements and parties (Canessa 2000: 127).

MNR's governmental program *Plan de Todos* comprised a massive series of policies and legislations aiming to construct a minimally regulated market economy and decentralized and multicultural state (Grindle 2003: 330; Kohl and Farthing 2006: 84–5). In 1994,

the Bolivian constitution was rewritten and, for the first time, it stated Bolivia to be a “multiethnic and pluricultural nation” and included mention of indigenous rights to territories, natural resources, and their own values and identities (Postero 2007: 52). A wave of privatizations and reforms of the state administration were accompanied by a series of pro-indigenous reforms. Also labeled ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ (Hale 2002) or ‘state-sponsored multiculturalism’ (Postero 2007), the latter included the establishment of collective land titling as part of land reform (*Ley del Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* INRA 1996), bilingual and intercultural education within education reform (*Ley de Reforma Educativa* 1994), and the enhancement of local level political participation through administrative decentralization and the Popular Participation Law (*Ley de Participación Popular* 1994).<sup>29</sup> Albó (2008) has argued that the inclusion of indigenous components in neoliberal reforms was done in order to consolidate neoliberal state policies and SAPs by giving them a more humane image. Gustafson (2009) has endorsed Albó’s argument by suggesting that pro-indigenous reforms were undertaken in order to avoid social unrest at a time of massive unemployment, rises in food prices, and cuts in social services.

Mid-1990s pro-indigenous state reforms have had major impact on the contemporary state transformation process in many ways. The introduction of bilingual intercultural education has not solely enhanced the elaboration of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies but also opened up forums within indigenous NGOs and communities for political mobilization on the basis of these alternative forms of thinking (Gustafson 2009). Many contemporary ministers and vice-ministers, Noel Aguirre, David Choquehuanca (the Minister for Foreign Affairs), and Hugo Fernandez (the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs), among them, have backgrounds in NGOs that promote intercultural education (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). Meanwhile, land reform and the process of decentralization had two interrelated, yet contradictory, impacts. On the one hand, indigenous ideas of self-governance materialized to some extent through the entitlement to indigenous territories (*Tierras Comunitarios de Origen*, TCOs) especially in the lowlands and through increasing indigenous participation in the main organs of municipal politics known as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs) (Albó 2008: 49–54). On the other hand, the increasing participation in local politics facilitated the inclusion of indigenous peoples in state affairs over time (Albro 2005; Van Cott 2008). This paradox was identified by Morales’ ministers including the above mentioned Hugo Fernandez, who told me:

The Law of Popular Participation was a measure by a neoliberal government to compensate for the consequences of the imposed neoliberal economic reforms. It was a way to

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<sup>29</sup> In general, these reforms were typical of neoliberal economic restructurings: the land reforms established legislative norms for (private) land ownership (Albó 2008: 52); and the process of decentralization shifted decision-making and service provision from the central state to municipalities (Postero 2007: 53).

incorporate the whole population into this new scheme. Paradoxically, the Law of Popular Participation opened up new ways of participation in small, predominantly indigenous, municipalities where people learnt how to vote and how to use electoral processes at the local level. After that people said: “If we were able to do this in the municipalities, we can do the same at the national level”. This empowered indigenous movements to demand a government that reflects their patterns of thinking and their ways of being.

The observation by Fernandez seems to coincide with the suggestion that “in some contexts [neoliberalism] open[s] up spaces for indigenous challenges to, and participation in, local and regional policy implementation” (Laurie et al. 2005: 473). How then did neoliberal restructuring appear compatible with identity concerns and indigenous political goals? The first issue to be raised is what Paulson and Calla (2000) call the “individualizing dimension” of neoliberal state formation. According to them, “this dimension produces subjects who fit into social categories such as gender or ethnicity”. While the corporatist, developmental state had classified people in terms of their collective class position, now fragmented identity formations, individual liberties and responsibilities had become common parlance. According to Schwarzmantel, a so-called ‘politics of difference’ has emerged because “the power of ‘class’ as a collective subject...has been eroded” (1998: 165). The powerful role of trade unions, which had been at the core of Bolivian corporatist politics for centuries, was disarmed with the privatization of state enterprises and the consequent unemployment of tens of thousands of workers from the mining sector, industries, schools, and state administration. The subsequent displacement of class, mentioned by the Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) as a central feature of millennial capitalism, resulted in the loss of collective demands for redistribution of productive relations, lands, and wealth. Although the emphasis on the importance of identity politics is potentially beneficial for indigenous peoples, there is a danger of reducing indigenous issues to mere recognition rather than demanding redistribution between indigenous peoples and others. And this, indeed, is exactly what happened in Bolivia. While indigenous issues were ever more present in policy discourses, promoted by neoliberal governments and international donor agencies alike, deteriorating economic conditions and poverty rates remained alarming. Postero (2010b: 70) has, indeed, noted:

Global capitalism has not been kind to most Bolivians...Rather than opening up opportunities, the effects of neoliberal reforms have foreclosed options...[T]he notion of a neutral state out there protecting individual choices with neutral democratic institutions just doesn't ring true for poor and indigenous Bolivians.

Secondly, a key element in neoliberal restructurings was the withdrawal of the state from economic and social affairs. This neoliberal strategy of shifting state powers and duties to local levels through decentralization, a process that was undertaken in many countries of the Global South with the support of IFIs and development agencies (Andersson 1999:

3), resembled Rose's (1999) idea of government through community. Through the process of decentralization, major state responsibilities and twenty percent of the national budget were transferred to municipalities, where the tasks of the community were executed through mechanisms of participatory planning (Healy and Paulson 2000). Canessa (2000) has argued that discourses of indigenous nationhood were powerful tools for demanding economic and social benefits of the state for indigenous peoples. Now these demands were redirected to the community itself. This was the major issue in which neoliberal discourses of the withdrawal of the state coincided with indigenous political interests in indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Indigenous peoples were happy to regain some form of self-government and international donors approved the shrinking of the state. As a result, Postero (2007) has suggested that neoliberal multiculturalism opened up spaces for indigenous self-government. The same has occurred elsewhere. In the case of New Zealand, Larner, for example, noted that "neo-liberals and some Maori found themselves in unexpected agreement on a key theme: namely, the dangers of continued dependency on the state" (2000: 18).

IFIs, development agencies and NGOs had an important role in enhancing this curious collaboration. The underlying assumption on the part of IFIs, development agencies and governmental technocrats was that during the nationalist revolution, the Bolivian nation-state had grown into an enormously centralized and clientelistic – often corrupt – piece of machinery which was in need of major reform through decentralization (Urioste 2009: 112). At the same time, identity concerns had obtained prevalence in development discourses worldwide. After the end of the Cold World, human rights discourses, including those concerning women's rights and indigenous rights, blossomed in international agendas. In Bolivia, IFIs and development agencies supported pro-indigenous reforms to such an extent that the governmental Subsecretariat of Ethnic Affairs, for example, was fully funded by European bilateral donors (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 86). Indeed, during my fieldwork many development agencies seemed to be keen on underlining their own role in the advancement of Bolivian indigenous affairs, as was explained to me by a development expert from a bilateral European donor agency:

Little has been achieved [by Evo Morales' government]...We were...the pioneers in the country to support intercultural bilingual education...Indigenous movements were gaining more [political] space even before Evo won...it has to do with earlier laws...For example, the Law of Decentralization and the Law of Popular Participation were important for indigenous peoples, and it was not created by this government...

Yet while the Bolivian state outsourced its economic and social affairs to transnational and non-governmental actors, it did not lose its cogency politically. The Bolivian state was "pro-market, but by no means anti-state" (Gustafson 2009: 161). Although the responsibility for the provision of social services was increasingly being shifted from

the state to municipal governments, the Bolivian government did not lose its interest in governing and controlling its population and territory. Goldstein (2004) has suggested that the Law of Popular Participation functioned as a tool through which state governmentality and power was disseminated in a more subtle way than through force to areas that had not previously been effectively governed by the state. In this way, the state entered even those potentially dangerous (indigenous) municipalities which were centers of resistance against the central power. The aim was to make conflictive indigenous masses more disciplined through their self-governance and by rendering community technical via policy and legislation.

#### **4.1.5 Indigeneity as Anti-Globalization Alternative**

From the late 1990s, the critique of capitalization generated ongoing social protests during the governments of ex-dictator Banzer and his successor Quiroga from the right-wing party ADN (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 120–1). Internationally, the booming of Bolivian protest movements and street actions coincided with escalating anti-globalization movements all over the world, including the US and Europe. Together with the FTAA protests across Latin America, Bolivian movements were inspired by the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO), the establishment of the ATTAC, the launch of international fair trade and debt relief campaigns, and the emergence of new civil society forums such as the World Social Forum (WSF) (Mayorga and Córdova 2008: 17–8, 34). As discussed earlier, both the Cochabamba Water War and the Gas War symbolized the culmination of fatigue and anger with the aid conditionalities of international aid actors and the overpowering role of transnational corporations. As such, conflicts and contestations were “a response to the perceived violation of Bolivia’s ‘national sovereignty’” (Albro 2005: 446). To regain national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* global actors was increasingly enhanced by an emphasis on endogenous development paradigms, something internal to Bolivia. Consequently, indigenous cultural discourses were employed in anti-globalization struggles as local alternatives to global processes.

In fact, both “wars” were also celebrated as victories for indigenous Bolivia (Albro 2005). In the case of the Water War, “a rallying point for...cross-sector and largely city-based movement was the defense of the use and distribution of water as a collective cultural heritage based on indigenous rights, or *usos y costumbres*” (ibid.: 435). It was argued that natural resources were the gifts of the indigenous *pachamama*, the Mother Earth, and thereby unsuitable for commercialization (Olivera 2004). In their counter-discourses, peasant unions and indigenous organizations sought inspiration and legal backup from the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous rights. The capitalist commodification of such vital natural resources as water was represented as a violation of indigenous collective

rights and their cultural values of communitarianism. (Assies 2003: 16–7). Although drawing on global indigenous discourses, indigenous cultural discourses were portrayed as a locally grounded alternative to capitalist commodification.

In the case of coca leaf, peasant unions had already successfully tied its defense to global indigenous discourses: it was argued that US coca eradication conditionalities were an assault against ancient indigenous cultural traditions and national cultural heritage.<sup>30</sup> “If among themselves the Chapare coca growers often self-identify as ‘*campesinos*,’” wrote Albro, “nationally and internationally [they] highlight their indigenous heritage” (2005: 439). Water, coca and gas were all tied to discourses of conserving natural resources as national patrimony which was being threatened by the influence of foreign political and economic interests. Linking national concerns and indigenous identity brought transformation: “Indigenous advocacy now [took] the form of broader – and plural – civil society coalitions rather than pursuing a marginal, if more exclusively autonomous, identity politics of its own” (Albro 2005: 436). Indigeneity had thus emerged as an essential, yet not the sole, element in national political discourses (Lazar 2008: 8).

## 4.2 DEFINITIONS, MEANINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGIES

In the following, I will first describe and explain how social movements and indigenous organizations define indigenous terminologies, such as the notion of *suma qamaña*. I will also look at what kinds of meanings are attached to it and for what purposes. Movement demands have found an echo and intellectual, scholarly support from various academic strands and writings on indigeneity; in Bolivia, the role of indigenous intellectuals has been particularly strong in both academic debates and movement activities (Lazar 2008). Therefore, I then move into discussing how specific indigenous scholars and activists, as well as anthropologists, define the notion of *suma qamaña*, focusing on those who most of my informants identified as the main elaborators of the concept; some of the latter have also become important intermediaries, translators, and brokers of policy knowledge (Lewis and Mosse 2006; Pottier 2003) between different kinds of actors at the Ministry of Development Planning and other ministries. Throughout the study, I refer to these indigenous scholars and activists as ‘indigenous culturalists’ meaning that they are promoting indigenous causes principally through discourses of cultural difference rather than, for example, class struggle.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, many indigenous and non-indigenous

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30 The significance of coca for indigenous cultural identity has been examined, for example, by Allen (1998) and Spedding (1994).

31 I am indebted to Carlos Arce, the director of the research institute *Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario* (CEDLA), for introducing me to a term which I have since heard used by many others.

intellectuals who have backgrounds in other scholarly debates have become prominent political figures. These include ex-Minister of Education Felix Patzi, Vice-President García Linera, and ex-Vice-Minister of Strategic Planning Prada. Therefore, thirdly, I examine their views on indigeneity and politics in order to map some of the thinking patterns and scholarly influences behind governmental political discourses.

#### 4.2.1 Suma Qamaña as a Political Demand

Scholars such as Mignolo, Quijano and Escobar consider social movements and indigenous organizations to be actors providing alternatives to both capitalist economic globalization and Western forms of colonial knowledge. The notion of *suma qamaña* has been one concept that has provided a conceptual and discursive imaginary for an alternative cultural and political framework that would have the potential to modify prevailing social, political, and economic structures. After my departure from Bolivia, I received a message from the Vice-Minister Aguirre explaining that the Ministry of Development Planning was about to organize a seminar for intellectuals and social movements working on the topic of *vivir bien*. Indeed, a seminar entitled *Vivir bien: una alternativa transformadora de desarrollo* was held in November 2009. Both foreign and Bolivian anthropologists, indigenous intellectuals, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions from Bolivia and the neighboring Andean countries gathered together to share and to discuss their perceptions on the notion of good life and its governmental application. The following is based on the analysis of workshop materials that I received from the Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination after my fieldwork had already ended (Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination 2009).

One of the indigenous organizations that participated in the seminar was the CONAMAQ. In respect of the policy content of *suma qamaña*, the CONAMAQ's message to policy makers was clear: the fundamental basis for achieving *suma qamaña*, or *allin kawsay* in Quechua, is the recovery of indigenous self-governance over traditional lands and territorial units, *ayullus*. Through cultural representations of what Viatori (2007) calls "identifiably indigenous imaginary", the control of lands and territories was portrayed as having much wider significance than mere economic interests or political gain. Good life, it was argued in their presentation, would be acquired through the knowledge of *pacha*, an Aymara and Quechua term that refers to land, earth, and universe. It has many culturally important derivatives, such as *pachamama* or Mother Earth, "in whom are incarnated

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In our discussion, Arce talked about different strands of actors within the governing regime and identified 'indigenous culturalists' as those promoting cultural critique of capitalism, on the basis of Andean worldviews known as *cosmovisiones andinas*. He called these intellectuals and activists 'culturalists' because their critique did not include an in depth analysis of productive relations or capital accumulation.



both space and time” (Harris 1982: 52); *pachakamaq*, the creator deity of the universe and the dyadic male counterpart of the *pachamama* in ancient Inca mythologies (Medina 2006b [1999]: 285); and *pachakuti*, the new beginning, the emergence of a new cycle, and re-foundation of the universe in the cyclical cosmological order (Bouysse-Cassagne et al. 1987). The knowledge of *pacha*, argued the CONAMAQ representatives, creates harmonious relations between men and women, as well as between social, spiritual, and ecological spheres of life.

The prerequisite for obtaining this knowledge, and hence good life, was that it would require the people to belong to the *ayullu*. Historically speaking, living in *ayullu* was, as we have seen earlier, based on reciprocal patterns of exchange in terms of social organization and economy (Murra 1978). It also tied generations into a continuum of ancestry through land rights and inheritance of houses, while at the same time sacred cosmological beliefs and relations between the dead and the living were inscribed in specific geographical spaces and territorial arrangements (Harris 1982). In many ways the CONAMAQ’s demand for the recovery of *ayullus* and indigenous nations (*nación originaria*) paralleled what de la Cadena and Starn have observed of indigenous territorial claims worldwide: “The defense or recovery of territory has very often become more than just a matter of economic survival, but also connected to the dream of revitalization, homeland, and restored dignity” (2007: 14).

The seminar presentation clearly showed that the CONAMAQ was promoting two parallel forms of governance through the notion of *suma qamaña*. It argued for the construction of plurinationalism through the complementarity of, firstly, a system of indigenous nations based on ancient indigenous territories and governing structures, called *aransaya* (referring to the dual organization of pre-colonial *ayullus*); and, secondly, the Bolivian nation-state system, called *urinsaya* (see Klein 2003: 13–23). The antagonistic idea of ‘two Bolivias’ often used in order to emphasize sharp divisions between indigenous peoples and *k’aras* (whites) (Albro 2005: 434; Gray Molina 2003: 358; Reinaga 2001[1970]: 174), and with historical resemblance to the dual organization of legal and institutional systems (the *república de los españoles* and the *república de indios*) during the colonial rule (Postero 2007: 27), was translated here into the more constructive idea of the Plurinational State. While the state would, in fact, be transformed into a conglomeration of self-governing indigenous nations, there would be a complementarity between the two governing systems: indigenous nations and the state. According to the CONAMAQ, the promotion of the system of self-governing indigenous nations is justified because of the history of the Aymara and the Quechua as the first peoples in Bolivian territory, as well as on the basis of what is stated, and promised, in Bolivia’s land reform laws and international conventions on indigenous rights.

In their presentation, the CSUTCB, the main peasant organization, joined the CONAMAQ in its demand for indigenous self-determination (*autodeterminación*). It was



argued that the Bolivian state is built upon exploitative relations of internal colonialism which has led to poverty, unemployment, and the social and cultural exclusion of indigenous peoples. The state, it was noted, has traditionally represented the interests of a narrow political and economic elite in the service of transnational economic and development actors. As a result, the CSUTCB argued strongly for the recovery of national sovereignty in relation to natural resources and the management of the state. In the proposal of the CSUTCB, the decision-making of the new Plurinational State should take place through *cabildo*, the town government during the colonial period (Klein 2003: 59), but in contemporary movement discourses more commonly referred to as an assembly or meeting of social movements, indigenous organizations, and local, territorially-based social groupings. It should function on the basis of the complementarity of opposites (*ayni*, a traditional form of reciprocity) with representatives appointed through both rotation and elections, and with a diarchic government comprising dual leadership by a man and a woman (*chacha-warmi*) as inscribed in the principle of complementarity (see Chapter Five).

What these organizations and unions suggested was that there exists no alternative future in which *suma qamaña* – supposedly the collective and harmonious wellbeing of indigenous communities in all their social, economic, and spiritual aspects – would prevail without increasing indigenous political agency and the decolonization of the state; this would take place by emphasizing indigenous territorial sovereignties and self-governance of plural political formations. This is a radical demand for the traditionally centralized Bolivian nation-state, or any state, for that matter. Niezen, for example, has claimed that the idea of “first nation lies outside the accepted norms of nation-states and the traditions of liberal democracy” (2003: 16–7). By enhancing their own knowledge and epistemologies, Escobar (2010a) argues that they are aiming at “epistemic and cultural decolonization”. Here the question of indigenous self-governance is portrayed as a new form of democratic participation through the appreciation of pluralism. This way, the audibility of the voices of social and indigenous movements is – ideally – more strongly enhanced in the form of ‘governing pluralities’.

## 4.2.2 Suma Qamaña as Aymara Worldview

Simon Yampara, an Aymara scholar and activist, who started to write about Aymara knowledge systems, cosmologies and *naciones* in the early 1990s (Yampara ed. 1993; Torrez and Yampara 1998), shared with me his elaboration of the Aymara concept of *suma qamaña* at his office of indigenous affairs at the city council of El Alto in a busy January afternoon in 2009.

I started to think about this term at the mid-1980s... I attended *jaqicha*, processes of consecration of marriage [in Aymara communities]. Marriage is a kind of a journey; it provides one a passport to *pacha*, which is an interminable [cosmological] time and space. The family of the bride and the family of the groom, as well as the whole kin, give advice on how the couple can live well. They conclude the ceremony with a sort of a paradigm of life by saying *suma qamaña*, that is, a suggestion to live well... You can hear this same saying in almost all [Aymara rituals]. This is where I caught the idea that *suma qamaña* is a paradigm of life present in everyday practices... People don't talk about development; they rather talk about *suma qamaña*; that is, wellbeing and harmony.

Yampara's discussion of the origins of the concept *suma qamaña* associated the term with everyday ritual practices of Aymara communities in the Andean highlands. It was the guiding principle, an ideal, for harmonious life with the family, kin, and community. Therefore, it was portrayed as regulating the social organization of the community. Yet achieving full social identity (Harris 1982: 63), that is, becoming *jaqi*, the status of an adult or a human being acquired on marriage between men and women in Aymara social structures (Estermann 2006: 65; Medina 2006b [1999]: 269), is not a purely social affair. Through successful fulfillment of community duties and responsibilities – often based on rotational reciprocal patterns and practices – adulthood opens up a passage to *pacha*, the cosmological principle and organization of the universe, mentioned by Yampara in the above quotation. But the notion of *suma qamaña*, or good life, is not merely about social relations and cosmological principles. This became clear when Yampara continued to explain yet another aspect of the meaning of *suma qamaña*, while the busy halls of the city council – crowded with white-collar officials, salespersons of all sorts, and indigenous groups from the neighboring countryside – buzzed around us.

My origin is in the *ayullu*. Until the seventies, there was a constant conflict with an ex-hacienda, whose attempts at expansion affected the *ayullu* lands. One community leader told me: “We have to defend our lands, the lands of *ayullu*. The *ayullus* are not of contemporary making; for thousands of years we have been born of these lands; it is just recently that our lands have been robbed.” *Ayullu* was [economically and ecologically] self-sufficient. *Ayullu* is a *jathacolca*. *Jatha* is in Aymara a seed.<sup>32</sup> *Colca* is storage, a nest, a stock of natural resources and wealth. We talk daily with the animals, we talk with the land, that is our relationship... At that moment I understood the meaning of lands and natural resources for the paradigm of life as *suma qamaña*.

Yampara's further description of the meaning of the concept brought up the fundamental importance of lands and territories for the achievement of *suma qamaña*. For the Aymara, “land is paramount; humans must serve the land both directly by cultivating it and through worship of the telluric spirits” (Harris 1982: 48). The state of *suma qamaña* (*vivir*

32 According to Aymara dictionaries, *jatha* refers to seeds, but also to a social unit of people who have joint access to lands, natural resources, and community obligations as in *ayullu* systems (Medina 2006b[1999]: 269).

*bien*) signifies harmony and balance between all the characteristics that define the *ayullu*: cosmologies, rituals, social and political organization, economy and production, and territory. If one of the characteristics is missing, the *ayullu* suffers from imbalance; that is, poverty and *vivir mal* (bad living). (Yampara 2001: 72.)

In Yampara's (2008; together with Temple) writings, indigenous *ayullus* and nations have, indeed, been portrayed as reciprocal, holistic, harmonious, and community-oriented. This 'Andean matrix of civilization' (*matriz civilizatoria ancestral*), therefore, appeared as a contrast to the 'Western matrix of civilization'. Crucial here is Yampara's division of these civilizations into two knowledge systems: one based on *suma qamaña*, and the other on *desarrollo-progreso* (Yampara and Temple 2008: 176–8). Let us first consider the characteristics of the Andean matrix of civilization. According to Yampara, its cosmologies and worldviews are holistic and centered on community and nature; its economic arrangements, human interaction, and labor relations, as well as its human/nature-relations, are based on reciprocity and complementarity: both individuals and communities as totalities strive to achieve a state of harmony and balance, and it is governed democratically through community decision-making patterns and through family units consisting of a man and a woman as a pair. (Yampara and Temple 2008: 176–8.) The Western matrix of civilization, on the contrary, separates individuals from communities and from nature; draws on private property, competition, and accumulation of capital, and creates unequal productive relations between the capitalist ruling classes and subservient working classes. It is perceived to be manifested in both liberal and left-wing political thinking; consequently, indigeneity represents an alternative political vision to both "the logics of capitalist-liberal-neoliberal ideologies" and "the logics of state interventionism and socialist ideologies" (*ibid.*).

Similar juxtaposing of opposites, even to the use of the same concepts, is represented in the works of Javier Medina, a self-termed Washington Consensus technocrat. Medina and Yampara both recognized their mutual influence on each others' work but also noted that their formulations of the notion of *suma qamaña* had been inspired by the works of French anthropologist Dominique Temple. Drawing directly on Mauss' (2009 [1950]) *Gift* and Sahlins' (1972) *Stone Age Economics*, two classics of economic anthropology, Temple (1995) has reiterated reciprocity and redistribution as basic principles of indigenous economy in the Andes. When I met Medina for an interview at his home, he told me that his long-term work experience with World Bank-financed social funds (*Fondo de Inversión Social*), the Law of Popular Participation, and the national dialogue of the PRSPs had made him realize that technical solutions to development do not work if indigenous worldviews and traditions are not taken into account. As a result, he had developed a massive body of texts related to encounters between the 'Western world' and indigenous ideas (1999 [published in 2006b]; 2000; 2001; 2002), including reports written to the German GTZ on the Aymara notion of *suma qamaña* (2001 [published in

2006a]) and Guaraní notion of *ñandereko* (2002b).

Medina differentiates between two conceptions of good life (*buena vida*): firstly, the Western tradition that draws on mythical, Christian notions of the Garden of Eden and on philosophical, Aristotelian ideas of civilization which both, according to Medina, separate humans from nature, mind from body, and spirituality from reason; and, secondly, an Andean paradigm in which these elements are complementary. A system of classification, elaborated by Medina (2008: 63–4), between the two matrixes of civilization defines the main characteristics of *yanantin* (the indigenous world) as the following: community, *pachamama*, myths, spirituality, cyclical time-space, holistic reasoning, and gender equality among other elements. *Ch'ulla* (the Western world), on the contrary, relies on individuals, natural resources as commodities, rationalism, secularization, lineal time-space, abstract reasoning, and patriarchalism. For Medina (2006a: 107), the Andean good life refers to a situation in which:

[Indigenous peoples'] *chacras* [lands; fields] flourish; they have animals to breed, time to organize rituals, water and pasture for their animals...; enough resources for reciprocity, through which their human values appear: friendship, alliance, confidence, mutual cooperation...In this model of austerity; equilibrium; and, complacency of the good, beautiful and necessary; no human being is excluded, nor the Gods or the nature. [my translation]

Medina (2002b) defines the term *ñandereko* in similar ways to the historian and anthropologist Bartomeu Melià (1988; 1989), who perceived it as the Guaraní way of life (*nuestro modo de ser*).<sup>33</sup> Its main components entail reciprocity and a search for fertile, cultivable lands and territories (*tierra-sin-mal*). In other words, in Medina's perception, the indigenous good life is life itself, the traditional way of life of the Andean and lowlands indigenous peoples. Medina told me that he had hoped that these insights would help to bring issues of indigeneity into the design of state policies in a more profound manner. Instead, his suggestions were not taken seriously by the World Bank staff, because, suggested Medina, "their technocrats are not familiar with the cultures of those countries in which they work". Additionally, he had felt that at the turn of the millennium there was deep hostility among both international and national actors towards indigeneity to such an extent that "for them, it seemed crazy if someone talked about cultures, ecology, spirituality and [indigenous] knowledge".

On the other hand, someone whose ideas on indigeneity were actually heard by development donors and national governments was Xavier Albó, a well-known Bolivian anthropologist, whom I met for the first time in 2002 in a seminar organized by the

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33 The term *ñandereko* appeared for the first time in the Guaraní dictionary *Tesoro de la Lengua Guaraní*, composed by Father Antonio Ruiz de Montoya in 1639 (Medina 2002b: 68).

UN. As a clear contrast to other development experts' speeches on the Bolivian PRSP, maternal mortality rates, and population growth, Albó's invited speech stirred the crowd of economists and other development experts with its radical suggestions of the importance of indigenous ideas for policy making. When I met Albó in early 2009, this bureaucratic incident seemed ancient history. In sharp contrast to a few years earlier, Bolivia's governmental schemes of improvement now rested on indigenous ideas. Always widely consulted, Albó was now especially busy, having been approached by David Choquehuanca, the Minister for Foreign Affairs (more on him in Chapter Five), for the elaboration of indigenous terminologies for the new constitution. At the request of governmental authorities, Albó had also published a study about indigenous autonomies in order to further the process of constructing the Plurinational State.

As one of the Jesuit co-founders of the research and advocacy institute CIPCA, Albó had been intimately involved in indigenous and peasant movements for decades. Drawing on his long-term field experiences in Aymara communities, Albó also related the notion of *suma qamaña* to the traditions of reciprocity in Aymara communities which, in his opinion, involved numerous practices: community labor (*ayni*), exchange of gifts and services inherent in the yearly agricultural cycle, the organization of community celebrations and rituals, the organization of marriage festivities and becoming an adult (*jaqi*), and the elaborate rotational system of *cargos* (positions of authority and decision making). In linguistic terms, Albó explained that the meaning of the Aymara word *suma* is 'pleasant', and 'good', as well as 'excellent' and 'perfect', while *qamaña* refers to verb 'to live', 'to reside', and 'to take care of each other'. Together they entail both social and ecological dimensions: that of living in harmony with the family, kin, community, and also with the physical surroundings of *ayullu* lands and territories. A person who fulfils his/her responsibilities and duties towards the *ayullu* is understood to be rich and living a good life (*suma qamaña*), because s/he is surrounded by a web of social, economic, and spiritual relations and has the knowledge to live with others (*convivir*) in mutual support. Therefore, *suma qamaña* connotes a condition of co-existence and interdependence between community members, nature, and the world of beliefs (see also Albo 2011).

Albó noted that there is a tendency to idealize the notion of *suma qamaña*. It is "an utopia attached to the past", Albó noted, meanwhile explaining the importance that the nurturing of positive – and sometimes romanticized – visions of the past have for indigenous peoples who have continually been "pressured, colonized and disregarded (*reducidos a nada*)". To an extent, classifications and juxtapositions based on dualisms between Western and indigenous worldviews are *tout court* remnants of the structuralist past of anthropology. Importantly, Lazar has suggested that although collective cultural values and practices do exist in Andean forms of social organization, "it would be false to propose a model of the western imposition of liberal individualism on indigenous societies that are somehow naturally (or even predominantly) collectivist" (2008: 9). She

also reminds us that while many intellectual writings of indigenous scholars in Bolivia color indigenous cultures with nuances of dynamism and complexity, indigenous ideas are often translated into popular imaginations as extremely essentialist creations (ibid.: 10). Classifications fix indigenous peoples into places and spaces that are ahistorical. There is a danger of the transformative potential of indigenous peoples as political agents becoming paralyzed through their analytical placement into stable, unchanging reservoirs of culture, rather than in real-life practices of political agency and change.

### 4.2.3 Competing Intellectual Discourses

In the following, I introduce other indigenous ideas that circulate along with *suma qamaña* within the executive. The ex-Minister of Education and Aymara sociologist Felix Patzi has been termed one of the indigenous culturalists among the ministers of the state and I had the opportunity to hear his point of views on two occasions when he was no longer functioning as minister but was rather employed by the City Hall of La Paz (*Alcaldía de la Paz*). The first time I saw him speaking was in a gender meeting. At the presentation of an anarchist feminist proposal for the constitutional text, organized by a famous autonomous feminist group *Mujeres Creando*, Patzi defended the indigenous notion of *chacha-warmi* (gender complementarity), and accused the Catholic Church and the Bolivian colonial nation-state of having destroyed gender equality in indigenous communities (see more in 5.2). In addition to the Catholic Church and the Bolivian nation-state, he fiercely attacked the capitalist economic system and proposed an alternative in the notion of sovereignty (*pleno ejercicio de soberanía*). Indigenous sovereignty would, in his opinion, be best exercised through community traditions and territorial self-governance.

Although a promoter of Aymara self-governance, Patzi did not seem to be enthusiastic about the notion of *suma qamaña* as an indigenous policy idea when I questioned him on these themes at the city hall. In his opinion, ideas about *suma qamaña* are scattered, not well defined, and too idyllic and speculative. Patzi then continued to explain what the governing regime should do, in his opinion, to promote indigenous opportunity.<sup>34</sup>

The community system (*sistema comunitario*) should enter politics and economy; it is different than capitalism. In capitalism, one does not live well (*no se vive bien*) because one is alienated from work; there are those who accumulate more and others who do not... Because of elections and the competition between political parties, there is an alienation [from decision-making] in representative democracy. In community democracy, the people will decide, decision-making rotates. There are no parties; instead, parliamentarians, the president, and all the authorities are elected by rotation without the interference of political parties.

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34 Also explained in Patzi's book *Sistema comunal: Una propuesta alternativa al sistema liberal* (2007).

This resembled a return to the indigenous system of *ayullus*, where community leaders, appointed in rotation, decide on the political, economic, and judicial matters of the community. Patzi's interpretation of the country's development priorities would bring this community system to the national level:

This system of rotation used to be local, but now it will be more national. Obviously, it will not be easy, which is why we are having continuous conflicts in Bolivia. Two [development] paradigms have emerged: the liberal, Western, European, and modern paradigm and another ancestral paradigm which becomes vivid in each conflictive historical moment. One difference between these two in respect to the economy is that modernity supports a capitalist, privatized economy, whereas the indigenous ancestral strand promotes a community economy where the worker himself owns his labor force; he is not working for the state or for any private company. All the products that he produces are his in their totality. This is already completely different to both state socialism and capitalism.

Known for his radical and polemical promotion of Aymara nationalisms, Patzi's short term (2006–2007) as the Minister of Education at the beginning of Morales' first presidency produced fierce conflicts both with the Catholic Church over its role in the country's educational system and with teachers' unions who have traditionally played a major role in national politics through their union activism. As an indigenous culturalist, Patzi had infuriated important segments of both the left and the right with his radical visions of decolonization and accusations against everything "modern".

Prior to Patzi's time as a minister, he was an integral part of the intellectual group, *Grupo Comuna*. Even before their mutual engagement with the MAS, the relationships between Patzi and Vice-President García Linera, another member of the group, had escalated into conflict, García Linera accusing Patzi of being an extremist in his thinking: "A pro-Indian, Trotskyite extremist", as Patzi himself said in the interview. The members of the *Grupo Comuna* have combined academic and political thought and practice, actively contributing to the mobilization of social movements in Bolivia – especially since the Cochabamba Water War – both intellectually, by examining the movements' strategies and identities, and politically, by participating in them. Its role in defining new kinds of conceptual and discursive devices for policy making is largely linked to the political status of some of its members, such as García Linera and the earlier mentioned Raúl Prada. A mathematician and sociologist by profession, García Linera served five years in prison in the early 1990s because of his membership in *Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari* (EGTK), a *guerrillero* movement that combined Marxist (or Maoist) and Aymara thought (Lavaca 2006). Having roots in *Katarista* movements and inspired by the Peruvian *guerrillero* movement the Shining Path, the EGTK had organized bombings and planned to attack Spanish and US embassies during regional celebrations of 500 years of indigenous resistance in 1992. Other researchers in the *Grupo Comuna* include political scientist Luis



Tapia, Mexican sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez<sup>35</sup>, and sociologist Oscar Vega, who have all observed and participated actively in the activities of social movements but opted to stay outside the government.<sup>36</sup>

I had an opportunity to discuss the conceptual and intellectual thinking of *Grupo Comuna* with Prada in an interview on the premises of the Ministry of Finance, Prada's employer in January 2009. After having completed academic studies in Mexico, Prada got involved in an academic group, *Epísteme*. He explained that the main academic idea of this group was to challenge existing theoretical paradigms, and to develop their role in politics through this questioning:

For us, the critique of old paradigms formed a political attitude, because we believed that most of the academic sphere played a role in power relations; most of it sustained power relations. Our critique of universities was not solely academic, intellectual, or theoretical, but also political because we tried to take down, to deconstruct these institutions, these paradigms, and these models... We had strong links with political movements, social movements, and especially peasant movements. One of the trends then was to think about Andean cultures from an epistemological perspective; to draw epistemological outcomes from those paradigms that existed within Aymara cultures, Quechua cultures... We linked these with French social scientists, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and tried to think of power relations from the Foucauldian perspective as micro-physics of power: as a critique of institutions, as administration of bodies, of territories; as strong processes and dynamics between [Bolivian] society – social movements – and [state] institutions.

While *Epísteme* was mostly interested in theory-making and alternative epistemologies, Prada stated that the *Grupo Comuna* that emerged next was more inclined towards the practice of politics. Combining the backgrounds of García Linera and Gutiérrez in armed *guerrillero* actions with the orientations of other academics, they found common intellectual ground in neo-Marxist, post-Marxist and post-structuralist explanations, and in academic criticism of capitalism and colonialism at the peripheries; this they used to theorize the rise of social movements (García Linera et al. eds. 2000, 2001; Tapia et al. eds. 2004). The main unifying factor in the intellectual production of *Grupo Comuna* was the emphasis given to the role of social movements and indigenous organizations as subjects of social and political change. Incorporating influences from international scholars such as Gramsci, Negri, Foucault, Mignolo, and Sousa Santos, they highlighted the importance of plural political formations as agents of change. Just like indigenous culturalists, members of the *Grupo Comuna* were also interested in indigenous peoples but not in terms of their worldviews or cultural traits, rather as major movement actors.

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35 Raquel Gutiérrez, the ex-spouse of García Linera, was also imprisoned for years at the beginning of the nineties for her participation in the EGTK. Prior to that Gutiérrez had been involved in Mexico with El Salvadorian exiles, members of *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN). (Lavaca 2006.)

36 However, Luis Tapia is one of the founding members of the *Movimiento Sin Miedo* (MSM), an urban, left-wing political party that became the political ally of the MAS during Morales' first regime.



Although left-wing in its thinking, as are many scholars on Latin American new social movements, members of *Grupo Comuna* tended to be inclined towards more flexible identity politics than one based solely on class position.

In his book on Bolivian social movements, García Linera (2008) emphasizes the role of social movements as ‘plural collective actors’ (*actores colectivos plurales*) that have the capacity to democratize the making of national politics. The dilemma, according to García Linera (2007) is that, in Bolivia, the nation-state is built upon mono-culturalism while Bolivian society is, by nature, plurinational. Tapia (2002) has conceptualized this problematic as a ‘multi-societal condition’ (*condición multisocietal*). He shows that Bolivia is, in fact, composed of multiple societies, whose political structures, productive relations, cosmological principles, and historical formations are numerous and varied. Therefore, their compatibility with the supposedly homogeneous Bolivian nation-state is weak and prone to conflicts. During his visit to Finland in 2009, Tapia told me that one of the main aims of the social movement approach promoted by the *Grupo Comuna* is to analyze political subjects outside the state and formal political arenas and, thereby, to challenge the traditionally hierarchical state bureaucracy. The idea is to deconstruct hierarchical governmental structures, institutions and practices of the state and to bring to the fore the idea of plural forms of governing.

Sociologist Oscar Vega, a member of the *Grupo Comuna*, described Bolivian state-society relations to me in the following way in an interview:

State-society relations [in Bolivia]...have always been such that the object of change is the society and the state is the subject that allows this transformation. [It has been assumed that] this is the way to create a more developed and modern society, with more...discipline and control. What we are experiencing in the [current] Bolivian process is that the object of change and transformation is not society but the state, and the subject of change is society... This modifies the whole idea of the functions of the state, the role of the state...

In Vega’s opinion, modest state reforms are not enough; a process of profound state transformation is needed. He used the term ‘decolonization of the state’, by which he signified the destruction of neocolonial relations with the US and other countries with reference to issues such as trade and natural resources. On the other hand, he also referred to decolonization as the abolition of the domination and exclusion of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. According to Vega, the process of decolonization that started with the Constituent Assembly resembled in its initial stages those of other Latin American countries, such as Lula’s Brazil and Kirchner’s Argentina, where processes of strengthening the state *vis-à-vis* transnational actors had been initiated.<sup>37</sup> What makes Bolivia different,

37 Webber and Carr (2013b: 4–8), however, contest this view and perceive such countries as Brazil and Argentina as countries governed by the *izquierda permitida*, that is, more moderate and reformist left-center governments. Bolivia is perceived to represent ‘radical left’.

argued Vega, is the emergence of the notion of *suma qamaña*: the new perception of the state is intimately linked with indigenous ideas.

Despite differences, there are also themes that unify indigenous culturalists and those of the *Grupo Comuna*. Prada, for example, explained to me that the notion of *vivir bien* in both the MAS' governmental program and in the NDP was introduced as an alternative to capitalism, an issue with which everyone agreed. He explained that after having been a central political idea in social movements since the 2003 Unity Pact, and having been brought to the Constituent Assembly by these same organizations, the idea of *suma qamaña* had little by little been converted into a common discourse and translated into the Spanish notion of *vivir bien*. In a recent book, Vega (2011: 82–3) described the unifying qualities of the notion of *vivir bien* in the following way:

The expression *vivir bien* condenses the capacity to articulate various perceptions and practices in search of a common project. It is strongly opposed to all those concepts that are seen to be imposed by models and recipes for development and progress... *Vivir bien* is the name for all those initiatives and proposals that are born from the specific interests of different peoples and groups that are searching for concrete solutions and alternatives within the common framework... It is about making the state through the social and the cultural; making the state from the grassroots (*desde abajo*)... [my translation]

While the notion of *suma qamaña* serves many indigenous scholars and indigenous organizations in their political fights for self-governance, for others, the notion of *vivir bien* serves as the unifying conceptual framework for state policy-making within which various different kinds of ideas can be merged. I turn into the examination of this issue in the next chapter.

## 4.3 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has argued that the central meaning of indigenous terminologies, such as *suma qamaña*, is to enhance indigenous political struggles for self-determination, wrapped up in a discourse of cultural difference. This has been enhanced, on the one hand, by various indigenous activists and academicians that together with indigenous movements and organizations have been furthering these goals. On the other hand, these political goals are not solely local and particular to Bolivia but rather related to the global spread of indigenous ideas and global indigenous mobilization, as well as neoliberal global restructurings. I have argued that the notion of *suma qamaña* as cultural difference is crucial in enhancing the recovery of indigenous self-governance through autonomies and indigenous sovereign territories, a phenomenon that I call 'governing pluralities'. This has been intimately linked with changes in the global political economy that have shifted

governance from the state to global and local actors. Indigenous political goals and a neoliberal emphasis on government through community (Rose 1999) have important elements that collide with each other.

Li (2000) has argued that there are both benefits and risks in framing struggles for indigenous political goals within discourses of cultural difference. She notes that “struggles over resources, which are simultaneously struggles over meaning, tend to invoke simplified symbols fashioned through processes of opposition and dialogue which narrow the gaze to certain well-established signifiers and traits” (2000: 157). While resource struggles often take place within the frame of simplified symbols of indigeneity, indigeneity should nevertheless be considered as a complex and mobile term, which is “articulated in relation to a range of positions and struggles” (Li 2010: 385).

As we have seen from Bolivia’s history, self-governing indigenous communities, and even nations, have existed in different forms and varying shapes among Bolivia’s many indigenous groups. Yet in comparison to many other postcolonial societies, especially in parts of Africa where traditional chiefs and kingdoms have always performed as major local authorities (Hansen and Stepputat 2006), these indigenous areas have not been recognized as legitimate governing bodies. But now the construction of the Plurinational State potentially implies a major transformation for the putatively unified, coherent, monocultural Bolivian nation-state whereby ‘governing pluralities’ overcome its hegemony. This radical political idea of indigenous self-determination, signifying a major redistribution of resources, is advocated in the name of good life, through the unifying conceptual and discursive framework of the notion of *suma qamaña*. The idea of plurinationalism according to which autonomous indigenous territories, municipalities, and regions are to be self-governed by plural political formations such as social movements has immense democratizing potential. Ideally it constitutes indigenous peoples as the subjects of their own development. These ideas are discussed further in the next chapter.

## 5 VIVIR BIEN AS A STATE POLICY DISCOURSE

Bolivians have experienced various forms of calculated policy interventions aimed at transforming their lives. Starting with the nationalist revolution, followed by thirty years of totalizing modernization schemes in which the nation-state acted as a regulatory agent of development, Bolivia then faced the era of economic globalization and the spread of universal development ideas. Promoted by IFIs and other international development agencies, development policies, such as SAPs and PRSPs, transgressed national boundaries. Serving the purposes of global capital accumulation, development policy implemented in the Global South came to tie the governing and controlling of people into larger networks of power because “globalization – both in the sense of intensified processes of spatial interconnection associated with capitalist restructuring, and of the discourses through which knowledge is produced – is deeply infused with the exercise of power” (Hart 2002: 12).

A shift towards movement activism and the political left in Latin America has increasingly encouraged a critique of universalizing development paradigms, such as those promoted by the World Bank and other development agencies, and a search for local development paradigms. In Bolivia, the universalizing tendencies of international development aid are confronted by a locally grounded commitment to solving development problems through indigenous ideas. The notion of *vivir bien* became the backbone of the new National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Bolivia digna, soberana, productiva, y democrática para Vivir Bien*, NDP), launched in June 2006. As an overall policy framework, the NDP depicts governmental plans ranging from the nationalization of natural resources to the participation of social movements, and from foreign diplomacy to social policy. It outlines the principles and plans for how to govern the country and the direction advocated for its development. The emergence of this indigenous policy alternative is closely linked to the rise of social movements and indigenous organizations as a counterforce to economic globalization and universal epistemologies and knowledge claims. Those who have been the assumed targets of development policy (and nation-state led interventions prior to that) have become its main critics.

This chapter discusses the notion of *vivir bien* as a state policy discourse. Although it has been argued that much of the policy has not been implemented (Molero and Paz 2012; Postero 2013; Webber 2011), I agree with Postero’s view that the analysis of the NDP illuminates “how the MAS discursively linked neoliberalism to colonialism and how it located its alternative project within indigenous customs and potentials” (2013:

33). First, I examine the process of elaborating the NDP and describe and analyze the conceptual and discursive construction of its contents. Second, I have chosen to focus on gender policy (*Plan Nacional para la Igualdad de Oportunidades* 2008) as an example of a policy that has been drafted under the overall framework of the NDP. Third, I examine indigenous elements in the new constitution (2008a) that, more than policy, will set the framework for the future state transformation process. Through analysis of these documents, I describe discourses that the new indigenous policy framework portrays. The views of ministers, consultants, and development experts complement analysis. I argue that despite diverse and often conflictive political and policy discourses emerging in the process of contemporary Bolivian state transformation, the notion of *vivir bien* is portrayed as a unifying alternative to global (Western) development discourses. The agents of this new policy are social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions that aim at new, democratizing forms of governing. I advance the argument that the construction of the notion of *vivir bien* as an alternative state discourse and development policy framework contributes to the creation of new forms of governing pluralities. This continues the conceptual construction started in the previous chapter.

## 5.1 VIVIR BIEN IN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The process through which the notion of *vivir bien* appeared as a new development policy alternative was narrated to me by Aguirre at the Ministry of Development Planning.<sup>38</sup> Together with Carlos Villegas, the Minister of Development Planning, and other authorities at the ministry, Aguirre was responsible for the elaboration of the National Development Plan.

First of all, we have to reclaim an aspect from our history. For approximately twenty years, we have been undergoing a process of retrieval of our own cultures, our cosmologies, and our ways of perceiving *life*, that is, perceiving what is “development”. As a result of the emergence of all that is indigenous, or what we call *originario*, various thinkers, philosophers, and sociologists have appeared, including Aymara, Quechua, and Guaraní [scholars]. Among these [intellectuals], there it arises: *el vivir bien*. It becomes the central element of the development plan. [emphasis added]

38 Noel Aguirre occupied the position of Vice-Minister of Planning and Coordination from January 2006 until February 2009 when he was appointed Minister of Development Planning. From January 2010 Aguirre has served as Vice-Minister of Alternative and Special Education at the Ministry of Education. Together with David Choquehuanca (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Luis Arce (Minister of Finance) and Carlos Villegas (Minister of Development Planning; Minister of Hydrocarbons and Energy; President of the YPFB [*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*]), he is one of the ministers and vice-ministers who have served Morales’ government since its beginning. Given the continuous fluctuation of ministerial positions, the stability of these politicians has given them the media label of “untouchables” (Mendoza 2011). In 2014, they still occupy these governing positions.

Here Aguirre identified that the origins of the notion of *vivir bien* as state policy lie in the upsurge of indigenous movement activity and political mobilization since the 1980s and the 1990s. The revitalization of indigenous cultures and identity concerns occurred at the same time as the co-opting of the notion of development by economic growth agendas and global market rhetoric. This, according to Aguirre, motivated indigenous intellectuals and activists to elaborate more on the meanings and conceptualizations of alternative forms of development. Aguirre mentioned that he talks of development in brackets because, for him, as we will later see in more detail, the notion of *vivir bien* represents an alternative form of worldview and knowledge deriving from indigenous lived experiences; the notion of *vivir bien* emerged among academics and indigenous activists as an alternative *to* development. But what were the origins of its inclusion into national policy making? Aguirre continued:

Secondly, during the second half of 2005, when the members of the current government were making preparations for the [presidential] elections, they decided to discuss their major proposals as a political party. Various proposals emerged. It was suggested that we should concentrate on, for example, national sovereignty, eradication of poverty, or on inventing a new development model. Then one group, or fundamentally one person, raised his hand and said: “We cannot think of anything else but *el vivir bien*.” It was the current Minister for Foreign Affairs, David Choquehuanca. Choquehuanca presented his proposal according to which the governmental program of the MAS should be based on the notion of *vivir bien*. It was accepted. There, the specific phrase that later turned into the core of all the MAS’ discourses was invented. It was the “dignified, productive, and sovereign Bolivia for good life” [*Bolivia digna, productiva y soberana para vivir bien*]. Therefore, this was the occasion where the MAS explicitly incorporated [*vivir bien*] into official [discourses]; it had always been a theme of discussion, but now it was brought into national debate...

Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca, who, according to Aguirre, brought the notion of *vivir bien* into governmental discourses, can be associated with the so-called indigenous culturalists within the governing regime. With a background in the NGO program Nina (*Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social*, UNITAS) for the recovery of indigenous worldviews and the training of indigenous leaders, Choquehuanca’s suggestion to choose *vivir bien* as the MAS policy proposal drew from these experiences (for a more detailed history of *kataristas* and intercultural NGOs, see Chapter Four). According to Choquehuanca, the main characteristics of the notion of *vivir bien* include: respect for nature, consensual decision-making processes, respect for cultural difference, complementarity and harmony as cultural principles, the promotion of indigenous identities, reciprocal patterns of work and labor, respect for women as symbols of *pachamama* (Mother Earth), the recovery of natural resources and the exercise of indigenous sovereignty (La Razon 2010).

Aguirre’s explanation of the evolution of *vivir bien* as a development paradigm highlights various features of its origins. It becomes clear that the notion as a new

policy idea was one of many options. It came to represent a compromise among various concepts and initiatives that different political actors brought to the table, a kind of an empty signifier (Laclau 2005): a unifier among various – and very heterogeneous – political demands. This diversity of views has to do with the fact that the MAS as a political instrument rose to political power as a conglomeration of various strands of social movements. It has also come to host various NGO actors, left-wing scholars and activists (Dunkerley 2007; Postero 2010). Many ministers and vice-ministers originate from these latter groupings and do not comply with indigenous ideas of policy making. Ultimately, as was reflected in Aguirre's description, various perspectives, visions, and ideas about appropriate policy principles were present, and appear under the overarching discursive framework of good life. There were considerable interpretational ambiguities among political decision-makers over the meanings and interpretations of policy. While the concept of sovereignty in the title of the NDP can, therefore, be regarded as referring, at least partly, to indigenous self-determination, the concept of dignity had become part of indigenous vocabularies since the 1990 indigenous March for Territory and Dignity. References to production were important for indigenous communities, peasant farmers, and left-wing politicians.

Aguirre also explained the political origins of various policy terminologies. Indeed, the MAS declaration of its ideological principles and governmental program highlight many of those themes, such as the re-founding of the state on the moral basis of *vivir bien* that were later reflected, and replicated, in the NDP (Movimiento al Socialismo MAS-IPSP 2006).<sup>39</sup> While previous policy initiatives, especially PRSPs, underwent broad consultations with various members of civil society (Curran 2005; Dijkstra 2005; Molenaers and Renard 2002; Morrison and Singer 2007), the NDP was an exercise of the executive. The overall architecture of the NDP was designed by the then Minister of Development Planning, Carlos Villegas, an economist and the head of the postgraduate program of development studies (CIDES) at the University of San Andres in La Paz<sup>40</sup>, and Aguirre, a pedagogue and an expert on strategic planning. It was believed that as the MAS governmental program had the major popular support manifested in the 2005 elections, it had the legitimacy that it needed. The governmental program had been

39 The MAS governmental programme underlines the fact that the MAS represents “the people”; it is the government of the people (*gobierno del Pueblo*). The program has three main objectives: the re-founding (*refundación*) of the country with and for indigenous nations (*naciones originarias*); the destruction of a state that is neoliberal, exclusive, discriminatory, and colonial and its replacement with a new state that is dignified, sovereign, and productive so that all the Bolivians can live well (*vivir bien*); and the retention of natural resources for the benefit of all Bolivians. (Movimiento al Socialismo MAS-IPSP 2006.)

40 Carlos Villegas is also one of those ministers who have served the governing regime since the beginning. He served as the Minister of Development Planning between January 2006 and September 2006, and was newly appointed from September 2008 until January 2009. In the meanwhile he served as the Minister of Hydrocarbons (September 2006 – August 2008) and today he occupies the position of the President of the YPFB, the state-owned oil and gas company. The current Minister of Development Planning is Viviana Caro.

designed as a cooperative effort between social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions, as well as intellectual groups and some NGOs aligned to the MAS. At the same time, the process of detailing the new constitution was under way with considerable consultation and participation under the rubric of the Constituent Assembly.

It is apparent that the process of defining the political goals of the MAS, later to be translated into policy concepts in the NDP, was very rapid. Although the MAS had functioned as a political instrument since the mid 1990s, its sudden rush into national politics was a surprise for everyone. Most of the ministers whom I interviewed told me that the months before and after the elections were chaotic as leading political figures tried to identify concrete policy proposals and persons who could be appointed as ministers, vice-ministers, and heads of units in the ministries. The MAS had grown enormously as a protest party, but besides its two major campaign promises – the nationalization of hydrocarbons and the convening of the Constituent Assembly – it lacked concrete policy proposals. Most political decision-makers and policy-makers came to state rule with little or no experience at all in state administration. Therefore, the same plurality of ideas continued at the level of practical policy work at the Ministry of Development Planning, as Aguirre explained:

When the MAS won [the elections], the first thing was to create the Ministry of Development Planning. Additionally, the president told us that we have to make a development plan. Then, the first discussion we had among ourselves was: “What kind of development should the development plan promote?” Again the debate started: some said we should focus on sustainable development, others suggested human development, others economic development, and so on. But then we rethought what had been discussed previously and it became clear to us that the path had already been chosen; it was *el vivir bien*. *El vivir bien* with a slight difference: one word was added to the model of national development: democracy.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning was transformed into the Ministry of Development Planning (*Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo*), and its main development goal was defined as the enhancement of *vivir bien*. It covered the themes relevant for the political goals of the MAS, that is, dignity, sovereignty, productivity, and democracy. The notion of democracy mentioned here did not refer solely to new ideas of more democratic governance, but it was also portrayed as a reassurance to the public that the rise of Morales’ regime did not take place as a result of violent revolution but rather through peaceful channels of representative democracy.

As a policy document, the NDP makes explicit the discourse of the state. We can think of documents not solely as artifacts that say something, but that also do something: they have effects (Reed 2006). The discourse of *vivir bien* as a development paradigm aims at unifying various views and political tendencies within the MAS governing regime. Let us then turn into examining this plurality in the content of the NDP by looking at



it, first of all, as a decolonial indigenous policy option and, secondly, as a challenge to economic globalization.

### 5.1.1 Indigenous Epistemologies and Decolonial Policy

While Molero and Paz (2012) have recently offered a valuable assessment of the Bolivian NDP, their analysis lacks recognition of the significance of indigenous ideas within it. When economists or political scientists who are not familiar with indigenous discourses and social-movement activity assess the contemporary Bolivian policy framework through Western academic paradigms, they are in danger of missing the important implications of indigenous terminologies. The following section responds to this lacuna. The NDP (República de Bolivia 2007: 2) starts with the definition of the new concept of development which is stated to reside in the notion of *vivir bien*: ‘living well’ or ‘good life’:<sup>41</sup>

The notion of *vivir bien* expresses encounters between indigenous peoples and communities, and respects cultural diversity and identity. It means “to live well among ourselves”; it is about communitarian coexistence (*convivencia comunitaria*)...without asymmetries of power; “you cannot live well, if others do not”. It is about belonging to a community and being protected by it, as well as about living in harmony with nature, “living in equilibrium with ones surroundings”. [my translation]

This excerpt underlines such characteristics as the egalitarian nature of indigenous communities and the interdependence of social, economic, and ecological aspects within it. This latter idea is discussed through the concepts of ‘cosmocentrism’ and ‘holism’. Cosmocentrism relates to the idea that in indigenous communities, spiritual, social and material aspects of life are intertwined. Holism is defined in the NDP as a conglomeration of emotional, spiritual, social, cultural, political, and economic elements that together formulate a worldview that is opposed to linear Western models of growth and development. The idea of ‘encounters’ expressed in the above quotation refers to the ability of indigenous communities to contribute to the definition of development in

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41 The rest of the document is divided into four pillars of development: dignity, democracy, productivity and sovereignty. Dignity (*Bolivia Digna*) includes such policy sectors as education, health, social policy, and water and sanitation. Additionally, a justice sector, public security, and national defense are discussed under the title of dignity. The second pillar, democracy (*Bolivia Democrática*), discusses how the plurinational state is constructed through decentralization of power and through the increased participation of social movements in decision-making processes. The third – productivity (*Bolivia Productiva*) – introduces issues related to the economy, production, and trade. It represents major strategic sectors of the economy (hydrocarbons, mining, and so forth) and discusses income-generation and employment. The sovereignty pillar (*Bolivia Soberana*) is concerned with Bolivia’s foreign relations, international development aid, and trade policy. At the end of the NDP, there are additional sections concerning macroeconomics and investments.

more democratic, deliberative and horizontal ways than usual in Western development practice, said to be conditioned from ‘above’ and ‘abroad’. The above here refers to Bolivian political and economic elites, while the abroad refers to transnational actors such as IFIs and international development agencies.

Aguirre told me that, in his view, the essence of the notion of *vivir bien* is to highlight positive aspects of indigeneity, as well as to promote the active agency of indigenous peoples as subjects of change. This is important given that universalizing approaches to poverty reduction and economic growth tend to label indigenous peoples as poor and deficient, thereby constituting them as objects and targets of development interventions (on the power of labeling see, for example, Eyben 2007). According to Shore and Wright, “the objectification of policy often proceeds hand in hand with the objectification of the subjects of policy” (1997: 5). Prior to his involvement with the MAS, Aguirre, a well-known specialist in pedagogy, had been involved for years with NGOs such as CEBIAE (*Centro Boliviano de Investigación y Acción Educativa*), a research and education institute with ecumenical origins. He had been particularly active in its educational network (*Foro Educativo Boliviano*) which promoted intercultural bilingual education for indigenous peoples. Drawing on these experiences as well as his family background, he felt the need for the cherishing of indigeneity as a positive rather than pejorative denominator. Aguirre was born in a poor Andean mining community in Oruro. Of Quechua origins, his father was a miner and his mother a peasant farmer. Yet Aguirre was able to conduct his studies in an unexpected discipline and environment: economics at the Catholic University of La Paz, the most prestigious private university in the country. Aguirre told me that this juxtaposition between his personal everyday experiences of poverty and the luxurious, upper-class educational environment with its “purely neoliberal” teachings of macroeconomics, made him turn to the study of alternative, indigenous epistemologies.

The second important aspect is that it promotes harmony with nature and balance with one’s surroundings, including people, Gods, and nature (*equilibrio con lo que nos rodea*). In one of his seminar presentations, Aguirre emphasized that the notion of indigenous good life highlights the importance of indigenous communities and their mutually dependant coexistence (*convivencia*) which comes up in the often repeated governmental slogan, “*No se puede vivir bien si los demás viven mal*”. The third is that unlike liberal modernization paradigms and Marxist ideas of social change through class struggle – both of which tending to focus mainly on material aspects of development – the notion of *vivir bien* also takes affections, spirituality, and identity into account. It argues against the reduction of life to economic values and the commodification of everything (Gudynas 2011a: 445). Although anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and committed to social justice, the *vivir bien* paradigm is therefore not about socialism, because the latter comprises “part of the modern rationality, such as, for example, its faith in progress and its materialist perspective” (ibid.: 446). Due to its rejection of economic growth as the

emblem of development, its environmentalist orientation, and its focus on the quality of life, some commentators have associated the *vivir bien* paradigm with degrowth movements; however, the latter do not entail the intercultural and spiritual aspects of the former (Gudynas 2011a: 446). The notion of *vivir bien* can also be seen to resonate with non-materialist, human-centered development views, such as Schumacher's (1973) so-called 'Buddhist economics'.

In all this, the formulation of policy on the basis of indigenous ideas coincides with a similar process in fellow Andean country Ecuador. Approved in 2008, the new Ecuadorian constitution based on the *kichwa* (Quechua) notion of *sumak kawsay* (*buen vivir* in Spanish) defines it as a collective wellbeing that derives from indigenous cosmologies and philosophies (Walsh 2010). According to Gudynas (2011b), the notion of *sumak kawsay* confronts the idea of development as linear transformation from one stage to another; extends the idea of human wellbeing from material resources to spirituality and happiness; and treats nature as a subject of rights. According to Walsh, the notion of *buen vivir* signifies and constructs "a system of knowledge and living based on the communion of humans and nature and on the spatial-temporal-harmonious totality of existence" (2010: 18). Therefore, many argue that the notion of *vivir bien* is not an alternative discourse of development but rather an alternative *to* development altogether; something beyond it. This is reflected in the following quotation from an interview with Hugo Fernandez, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs:

It is not good to translate *vivir bien* as development. The concept of *vivir bien* is an Aymara concept. Although it is not static, neither is it linear as is the Western concept. Development is a linear concept that always moves from negative to positive. That is why we tend to talk about better life: "I want to live better". Contrary to that *vivir bien*... is about re-establishing balance... Colonization destroyed the balance [of indigenous communities], which is to be recovered now. And this balance is good life; you cannot have a good life, if people around you are not living well. *Vivir bien* is the new paradigm; it is a new way of seeing things.

Hugo Fernandez, a Catholic Jesuit and long-term NGO activist, told me that he had adopted these views during his various years of experience in working with Aymara, Chiquitano, and Guaraní communities in fields such as rural development, intercultural bilingual education and the capacity building of indigenous leaders.<sup>42</sup> Prior to becoming

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<sup>42</sup> The involvement of both Fernandez and Aguirre with the MAS had occurred through NGO activism, especially in the field of intercultural bilingual education directed at grassroots indigenous communities. Fernandez and Aguirre represent just a few examples of political actors and decision-makers with strong NGO backgrounds. Such ministers as Carlos Romero, Susana Rivera, and Alfredo Rada have been functionaries in a lowlands NGO Cejis (*El Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social*), which provides legal help and support for indigenous peoples demanding lands and territories. Various other actors have similar backgrounds (Quispe 2011). An interesting study for the future would be to map these NGOs and trace their histories, international and local networks, funding partners, strategies, and actions. Amidst an abundance of scholarly works on social movements, the examination of the

part of the executive, he had been working as the director of the intercultural education program Nina at the NGO *Unitas* where Choquehuanca had also gained his experience in the promotion of indigenous issues.

The NDP argues that development has to be constituted upon the “plurinational logics of civilizational coexistence” (República de Bolivia 2007: 2). An essential part of it is stated to be the complementarity of knowledge systems. According to the argumentation, “the myth of linear progress” inherent to Western development thought, has divided the world into those who know and those who do not know; into modern and pre-modern cultures; and into those who are assumed to be developed and those who are perceived as developing. The problem is, as the plan states, that unequal power relations that often follow ethnic and racial divides are produced, reproduced, and maintained through the administration of knowledge. This reference to the coloniality of knowledge resembles Mignolo’s idea of the geopolitics of knowledge (2008) and Quijano’s idea of the coloniality of power (2000). To end the imposition of this colonial knowledge from above and abroad, the NDP states that it aims to establish mechanisms for the development and application of the knowledge of indigenous peoples. The notion of *vivir bien* is an expression of this alternative form of knowledge and, therefore, can be regarded as decolonial policy option.

The cherishing of multiple indigenous identities, worldviews, and knowledge within the NDP has major political implications relating to new forms of governing the country. The NDP argues that a process of decolonization of the state is needed, because its structures, institutions, and practices are thoroughly infiltrated by neocolonial domination, ethnic exclusion, and racism. In practice, this requires recognition and support for plurality in both knowledge systems, and political formations and economic patterns. Consequently, the NDP strives for the construction of a new Bolivian identity by emphasizing the importance of plurinationalism and indigenous communities, suggesting a major transformation of the state. Social movements, indigenous peoples, and peasant unions are noted as the primary agents of contemporary transformation which includes the restructuring of the political power in favor of previously marginalized groups. The enhanced role of social movements in the democratic governance of the country becomes crucial, allowing the recognition of both self-governance (indigenous autonomies) and the role of plural social movements at the centers of state administration. The NDP concentrates on enhancing the participation, deliberation, and emancipation of indigenous peoples and their communities in ways that enable them to decide on the priorities and content of development from “their own culturally constructed points of view”, both within their own *naciones* and as leaders of the structures of state governance.

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role of NGOs in disseminating radical political alternatives and such notions as *vivir bien* has been minimal. Gustafson’s (2009) study on NGOs working on intercultural education already indicates that the assumption of their somewhat conservative and technocratic nature may have been exaggerated.

This democratization agenda emphasizes “the recovery of the capacity to decide for oneself”.

The emphasis thus given to enhancing indigenous self-determination through plurinationalism is very interesting when we start to examine its relationships with the below-mentioned project of national sovereignty. In the case of Ecuador, Bernal (2013), for example, has argued that despite the overarching constitutional principle of *sumak kawsay*, in the practices of the state the question of increasing state sovereignty has started to overrule its commitment to communal ideals. An interesting – and crucial – question that I tackle throughout the pages of this study is the relationship between the promotion of the sovereignty of the nation-state and the promotion of indigenous self-determination in the case of Bolivia.

### **5.1.2 Counteracting ‘Neoliberal Colonialism’**

On the one hand, the NDP is, therefore, based on the critique of Western epistemologies and knowledge claims by indigenous ideas. On the other, it presents a strong critique of economic globalization and introduces a new approach to state formation. Consequently, concerns over both indigenous identity and class struggle within the overall framework of global processes are addressed, as will be explained in the following.

According to the NDP, the role of the state needs to be enhanced in order to confront ‘neoliberal colonialism’ (see Postero 2013): a global capitalist economic system in which indigenous peoples appear meaningful solely as reserves of cheap labor power and as potential consumers of transnational goods. The surplus generated in this process solely benefits transnational companies, it is argued. Meanwhile the role of the state is reduced to a minimum which, on the one hand, reduces its agency as the provider of economic opportunities and social protection, and, on the other, increases its oligarchic, centralized, and corrupted nature.

Paralleling the observation by Molero and Paz (2012), Aguirre told me that, in economic terms, the main objective of the NDP resides in changing the pattern of an export economy based on a few natural resources (*patrón primario exportador*) in order to decolonize neoliberal forms of economic relations. Decolonization here refers to the abolition of neocolonial external dependencies. Echoing the state-led schemes of ISI politics in the Bolivian nationalist revolution era, the NDP concludes that the way out of inequality and poverty demands that the state takes a more active role in the use and control of major means of production through, for example, nationalizations and industrialization of natural resources, which would also create additional surplus for the state. Fernandez also identified the role of the notion of *vivir bien* in challenging an unequal global political economy. He continued that:

[The notion of *vivir bien*]...questions a development model created by capitalism. We believe that the global capitalist model has reached its limits; it is no longer sustainable. [The capitalist] development model has to be changed on a global level. Changes are required in standards of living and in lifestyles in developed countries. There is no longer room for concepts such as developing countries and developed countries; we won't accept that. We are not living good life if this division [between rich and poor countries] continues to exist. When everyone has an adequate standard of living – and I am saying adequate, not higher or lower – balance will be established and we can all live a good life.

The statement of the problem in the NDP, therefore, revolves around the notion of neoliberal colonialism, a concept concerning both the critique of neoliberal globalization and the need to change the colonial nature of knowledge and epistemologies prevalent within the state and spread by transnational actors. The solution implicit in this is that the notion of *vivir bien* serves as the tool for decolonizing neoliberalism and the coloniality of the hierarchical state. For these reasons, a new role for the state is proposed in the pages of the NDP: the state will constitute the provider of education, health, and social services in *Bolivia Digna*; it will operate as an active agent in regulating and controlling productive relations through, for example, nationalizations, in *Bolivia Productiva*; and it will recover national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* IFIs, the DEA, transnational corporations, and other global actors in *Bolivia Soberana*. *Bolivia Democrática* introduces forms of participation and decision-making for social movements and indigenous peoples in order to enhance more democratic practices.

One of the concrete manifestations of enhanced state sovereignty has been the launch of new foreign policy. While previous Bolivian governments enjoyed close relations with the United States, diplomatic relations between Bolivia and the US were broken in late 2008 only to be tentatively re-established in 2011 (on trade relations, see Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs 2013). Since 2008, the Bolivian government has banned the operations of the DEA. Venezuela, under the leadership of the late president, Hugo Chávez, has become its main political and economic ally through the *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* (ALBA), which is an economic alliance that “involves the exchange of energy producing products for services, primarily in the field of health care and education” (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 299). It is an alternative to the US-led FTAA that has the potential to “counter the capitalist foundations of existing trade agreements rooted in exchange values and profit seeking, with values of regionwide cooperation and economic complementarities” (Webber and Carr 2013b: 11). Its member states include Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and small Caribbean islands.

Direct Venezuelan aid to Bolivia has included the launching of the strategic agreement between the Bolivian state-led oil company YPFB (*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*) and the Venezuelan PVDSA (*Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.*), mining initiatives, rural development projects, education and health projects, military and surveillance guidance, communications, and humanitarian aid in cases of emergency (Rodríguez-

Carmona 2008: 215). However, trade relations between Bolivia and Venezuela within the framework of ALBA have encountered some difficulties: for example, protectionism on the part of Venezuela which has forced Bolivia to search for alternative trade relations (ibid.: 205). Another new strategic partner has been Cuba which has undertaken social programs such as literacy campaigns and medical support in the country (Postero 2013: 26; Webber 2011: 41). Largely due to this support, Bolivia was declared free of illiteracy in 2009 (Aguirre 2009: 2), but there has also been controversy: for example, the arrival of thousands of doctors in Bolivia as members of Cuban Medical Brigades has infuriated Bolivian doctors who suffer from unemployment (more than 4,000 out of work in 2006) (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 213).

Although the main focus of this study is on how indigenous political alternatives and policy ideas are represented in discourses and practiced by a variety of actors, it must be acknowledged that various state reforms have taken place since Morales' election, one of the most significant of which has been the nationalization of natural resources such as oil and natural gas. The income resulting from the nationalization of two of Bolivia's most strategic resources through the launching of the direct tax on hydrocarbon resources (*impuesto directo a los hidrocarburos*, IDH) have been directed into social benefits and conditional cash transfer programmes, the most important being education allowance (*Juancito Pinto*), maternity allowance (*Bono Juana Azurduy*) and pensions (*Renta Dignidad*), (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007; Kaup 2010; Molero and Paz 2012; Webber 2011). In terms of concrete changes in the political economy achieved by this approach, the response of different commentators has been mixed. Some actors perceive the increasing role of the state in the regulation of market forces and in the provision of services as a major shift. In his speech at the meeting of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and the IMF in 2009, Aguirre declared that:

Within the framework of a development model headed up by the State and a pluralistic organization of the economy, Bolivia has made profound changes in recent years that, in sum, include the nationalization of the oil and gas sector, improved income distribution, and enhanced social protection policies, without disregarding the preservation of macro-economic stability in a context of democratic process.

Academic commentators, however, have offered the criticism that ideas suggesting a postneoliberal era are merely discursive because the underlying political economy has not been radically changed. Despite the increasing role of the state, the process is far from radical, as Webber explains: "The tendency of the political economy over the entire... Morales's first term was toward a reconstituted neoliberalism, one that abandoned features of neoliberal orthodoxy, but retained its core faith in the capitalist market as the principal engine of growth and industrialization" (2011: 232). Some of the key features of what Webber (2011) calls reconstituted neoliberalism were the continuation



of extractive capitalism, the continuing influence of transnational capital, and the export of primary natural resource commodities. Although acknowledging that government revenue increased drastically because of changes to the hydrocarbons tax regime in 2006, the report of CEDLA (2006) criticized the fact that transnational corporations still hold a share of 18 to 49 percent of oil and gas extraction. Resonating with this, Orellana (2006) has asserted that the MAS regime has left large scale agricultural export, the properties of the big landowners, and the functioning of transnational corporations almost intact (see also, Ormachea 2008). Rather than decolonizing the economy, Molero and Paz (2012) have shown that the extractive model of the Bolivian economy has been further intensified during Morales' presidency.

However, there was rapid economic growth until the 2008 global economic crisis mainly due to international demand and high prices for hydrocarbons and minerals, and a small increase in private consumption (Webber 2011: 193). Although the entire Latin American region enjoyed high growth rates, the average GDP growth in Bolivia during Morales's regime was higher than elsewhere (*ibid.*: 171). While Aguirre (2009: 2) has stated that economic growth in itself is not the only goal, and that the government puts a high priority on income redistribution, economic data offers evidence to the contrary. Between 2005 and 2007, income inequality has shown only a modest fall, as measured by the Gini Index, from 0.60 to 0.56 (Molero and Paz 2012: 550). As a result, Molero and Paz have concluded that state policies have not had much impact on redistribution. Webber (2011: 201–2), for his part, has demonstrated that:

[T]he poorest 10 percent of the Bolivian population received 0.3 percent of national income in 1999, and still received only 0.4 percent by 2007...Meanwhile, the richest 10 percent of the population took home 43.9 percent of national income in 1999 and precisely the same percentage in 2007...The poorest 20 percent of society took in a mere 1.3 percent of national income in 1999 and, in 2007, a still paltry 2 percent. The richest 20 percent of the population pocketed 61.2 percent of national income in 1999 and 60.9 in 2007.

Public policies, and most specifically conditional cash transfers, however, have had a greater impact on poverty reduction (Molero and Paz 2012: 550). According to the most recent World Bank statistics, 45 percent of the population was considered poor in 2011 in comparison to 63 percent at the turn of the millennium (World Bank 2014a). Rural poverty has also decreased from 77.7 percent in 2004 to 66.4 percent in 2009 (World Bank 2014b). On the other hand, considering the government's revolutionary discourses, social spending has been low (Webber 2011: 198–9). Molero and Paz (2012) have demonstrated that even at its peak in 2008, public spending on social services has been lower during the Morales' regime than it was during the neoliberal era. Consequently, they have concluded that “the MAS government has not achieved structural transformation of the distribution pattern of the Bolivian economy” (2012: 552).



### 5.1.3 “They Consider Us as Western Capitalists”: Views of Foreign Donors and Bolivian Technocrats

Through my interaction with Aguirre, it became clear that, in his view, the core of the notion of *vivir bien* was crystallized in the critique of Western development. In one of his many presentations that I witnessed in policy seminars, Aguirre criticized theories and practices of development for various reasons. First of all, he claimed that the origins of development thinking are so intimately linked within “Western civilization” that their application in other kinds of empirical contexts tends to fail. Aguirre’s second criticism was a direct critique of the role of IFIs, development agencies, and transnational companies in Bolivia. These global actors tend to possess the hegemonic power to define development priorities and to implement policy in the Global South, he said, and concluded that this weakens national sovereignty and curtails the possibility of implementing local priorities for social change. According to Aguirre, the notion of *vivir bien* addressed these problems: it restores national sovereignty in deciding on parameters of development.

Aguirre’s view was shared by Claudia, a young female consultant and head of planning at one of Bolivia’s many ministries, who viewed the notion of *vivir bien* as an alternative to universal development models, as she explained to me in an interview at her office:

We don’t need to import [development] recipes. Why should we import [development] models if we are capable of constructing them ourselves? It is not easy, because we start from zero. Maybe there will be many failures along the way, many weaknesses, but it is ours; it has the label “Made in Bolivia”. We intend to give the economy a human face so that the free market system will not be the image of economy, an unequal system in which only few get rich. Development models that have been imported have not functioned. I am totally against them! Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have created these models and they wanted to implement them in countries such as ours without taking into account the economic, social and cultural characteristics of our country. So, clearly they have not worked, because recipes are not same for every country...

Here Claudia, who comes from a well-known Santa Cruz family of political figures, with relatives in important positions in Morales’ government, underlined both the need to change the economic system and to lessen the role of transnational actors in the making of development policy. The significance of the notion of *vivir bien* appeared here as the demonstration of local and national capacity to set contextualized priorities for the transformation of the country: “It has the label ‘Made in Bolivia’”.

Despite the MAS critique of global development actors and universal development paradigms, international development agencies initially reacted very positively to the political rise of the MAS and their policy agendas. Representatives of the Swedish SIDA and the Norwegian Embassy, for example, emphasized that it was a very positive thing that social movements and indigenous peoples had risen to political power. Furthermore,

there were high expectations that pro-poor development agendas would be implemented and the inclusion of indigenous peoples promoted – issues that Nordic donors had been supporting for years through, for example, education reform and administrative decentralization. Development experts at the SIDA expressed the view that they associated the notion of decolonization with the bridging of gaps between indigenous peoples and others, and with attempts aimed to make the state less discriminatory against the poor. The diplomatic representative of the Norwegian Embassy defined the notion of *vivir bien* as a strategy to end the exploitation of indigenous peoples and to promote harmony with nature and balance between people in economic and social terms. The nationalization of natural resources, which was seen to follow Nordic traditions of collaboration between the state and the private sector, was also strongly supported. Other bilateral agencies added that the political rise of the MAS had occurred through democratic elections with very wide popular support which provided strong legitimacy for the newly elected governing regime and its policies. One Bolivian development expert working for a bilateral development agency went even further by stating:

The first reactions of the international cooperation were positive...And if I can speak as a Bolivian, the general atmosphere at the beginning among Bolivians was that of pride. I believe that the international community also felt the pride of being part of this process. It was so symbolic that a person of indigenous origin should assume political power in a country where indigenous peoples have traditionally been discriminated against. Therefore, there was a strong will to support and collaborate with the government. I have never before experienced such a willingness on the part of international community to offer resources and technical assistance without even knowing what the policy would look like...

Having worked as the vice-minister for prior governments, this person was familiar with government-donor relations from far back in time. The executive had now made very clear rules for international aid: no conditionalities of aid would be allowed and decisions would be made, and processes implemented, by the governing regime rather than by the aid community (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 206). The process and content of the NDP, for example, was not discussed with donors, a course that would not have been possible at the time of SAPs and PRSPs (ibid.). Many told me that they understood this; one self-reflexive foreign diplomat, for example, stated that “decolonization is understandable from the historical perspective considering the strong role of IFIs and multinational companies in the country”. This is aptly illustrated in a quotation from an interview with a Bolivian economist who, at the time of my fieldwork, worked for bilateral donor agency but had long-term earlier experience with the Central Bank:

Some time ago the World Bank and the IMF and maybe even the IDB were very “pushy” with all the [Bolivian] governments... Neoliberal government X is getting along well with the Fund and the Bank and their technicians become friends and they work

together... International Financial Institutions knew everything that was happening [in the ministries]. They penetrated the Central Bank and the ministries and had an influence on everything. When [Morales'] government entered, this modality [of close cooperation between government and donors] changed... Now [donors] have to ask for a permission to do [things] and I agree that this is the way the cooperation should be. Bolivia has to make its policies independently and, for better or for worse, that is what it is doing now...

Another Bolivian development expert who identified himself as being of right-wing background stated with no hint of irony that many Bolivians – himself included – felt proud to have such a government that “intended to recover respect for the independence of the Bolivian state”. There was a very strong and widely spread ethos of having had enough of the Washington Consensus.

During the neoliberal regimes, Bolivia had become the so-called ‘donor darling’. In comparison to neighboring countries, its poverty levels were considerably higher and its social indicators were weak. Due to its obedient implementation of SAPs, its compliance with aid conditionalities, and its efforts in the direction of multicultural and decentralized reforms, it attracted one of the highest amounts of per capita of aid in the Latin American region (Booth and Piron 2004; Nickson 2005). Between 1991 and 1994, for example, it ranged annually from 660 to 760 million USD, that is, equivalent to an annual average of 12 to 14 percent of the GDP (Mendez 1997: 20). In 1994, almost 60 percent of public investments comprised Official Development Assistance (ODA) (ibid.: 22). The main donors were the IDB, the World Bank, the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the USAID, and the IMF (Mendez 1997: 26–7). Although Bolivia’s aid dependency declined towards the end of the 1990s, aid was still equivalent to approximately 6 percent of the GDP in 1997–2001 (Nickson 2005: 400). Nearly 50 percent of public investments consisted of foreign aid (ibid.). Hence, it has been argued that Bolivia “suffers from institutional aid dependency of a more or less classic kind, for reasons that are not dissimilar to those that apply in Africa” (Booth and Piron 2004: 2).

One of the main political discourses of the contemporary governing regime, as we have already seen, has been to emphasize national sovereignty with a principal goal of the nationalization of hydrocarbons being to recussitate the role of the Bolivian state in public investments. In addition to hydrocarbon revenues, new alternative sources of financing emerged from increased debt relief (discussed below), international migrant remittances, and new commercial relations (discussed earlier). The aim of all this was to “liberate” the Bolivian state from aid dependency. (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 239.) During my fieldwork, the Ministry of Development Planning proclaimed that the percentage of aid allocations to public sector investments had fallen to approximately 30 percent. In the beginning of Morales’s term, many bilateral donor agencies diminished their aid in order to discover the course of change (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 205). The aid statistics presented by Webber (2011: 37) from the first year of Morales’ presidency showed that in

comparison to the 1990s, aid allocations had drastically declined, totaling approximately 1 percent of the GDP; thus, providing a likely explanation for low governmental social expenditure.

When I sat down with the chief economist of the World Bank, I was expecting to hear strong criticism of the new approach. My interviewee, however, stated that relationships between the governing regime and the World Bank were very good. He explained that after fifteen years of strict control of development processes, the new leadership of the World Bank had opted for a more pragmatic and flexible approach with the governing regime in the sense that they allocated resources with less – or no – technical and financial conditionalities. Additionally, the World Bank had decided not to engage in any philosophical discussions over either the concept of development or the content of the NDP because, he said with a laugh, for economists, *todo lo político es muy confuso* (“all that is political is very confusing”). This observation paralleled Rodríguez-Carmona’s remark that “multilateral institutions expressed their will to maintain their presence in the country, leading to the question of who’s dependent on whom” (2008: 237). The chief economist also mentioned that in practice, Bolivia was no longer in need of economic and financial guidance as it had been before. The state of the economy was sound because of oil and natural gas exports, favorable world market prices for both these and for the products of mining, and the cancellation of massive debt in 2005 and 2006. After severe conditionalities on the part of the HIPC and Enhanced HIPC, Bolivia had finally qualified for the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) with complete debt cancellation by the IMF (International Monetary Fund 2005), World Bank (IDA) (World Bank 2006) and the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank 2007) (see also Calvo 2006: 50; Mollinedo and Velasco 2006: 136; Postero 2013: 40; Webber 2011: 33–5; on debt relief campaigns, see Mayorga and Córdova 2008). Additionally, due to the GDP growth, Bolivia was declared a lower-middle income country by the World Bank in 2010. As a consequence, its borrowing patterns with the World Bank have been shifting from concessional loans to new financial instruments, equivalent to those of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (Grupo del Banco Mundial 2010).

All, of course, has not been that rosy. Ultimately, although there was an abundance of resources flowing from IFIs and development agencies to the executive, the government, and especially the president, maintained their criticism of development aid and transnational actors. All those working in development agencies whom I interviewed related how they had been labeled “Western capitalists”, “protectors of imperialist interests”, and “neoliberals”. In early 2006, Morales did not sign the memorandum of understanding that was needed to launch a new period of cooperation between Bolivia and the IMF (Webber 2011: 34). With the global financial crisis, Bolivia returned to ask for IMF loans in 2008 and 2009. Bolivia has, however, continued to criticize both the World Bank and the IMF for loan conditionalities (Los Tiempos 2013).

In addition to difficult relationships with the IMF, relations between the governing regime and the USAID have constantly remained tense, and the amount of its aid has been on the decline (Webber 2011: 36–7). Historical memories of the role of the US in the militarization of the coca-growing Chaparé which led to the incarceration of Morales and fellow coca union activists, as well as the continuous suspicion of US diplomatic influence on the political opposition, has made these relations tense. It did not help that USAID suspended its aid actions in the Andean highlands in 2007, shifting its focus to those lowlands municipalities where the stance of the political opposition is strong (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 208). Consequently, Bolivia first prohibited the implementation of US-funded democracy projects in 2009, and, finally, in 2013, the USAID was expelled altogether. During my fieldwork in late 2008, a Bolivian development expert working for USAID told me that although they first saw the election of the new government as an opportunity to work for the benefit of the poor, they soon realized that they had very different ideologies and conflicting interests: USAID was not in favor of nationalization policies, while the governing regime continued to denigrate them as “imperialists” and “Western capitalists”. Although, as my interviewee states, USAID agreed with the notion of *vivir bien*, it did not accept the idea of decolonization. It was seen as a problem because, according to my interviewee, it implied historical devolution from the privileged to the underprivileged, and thus was against the rights of those with property and resources and against non-indigenous Bolivians.

These reflections showed a multiplicity of views and perceptions among donors over what “proper” social change should entail. As a consequence, the donor community is not a homogeneous entity.

## 5.2 CHACHA-WARMI: AN EXAMPLE OF A POLICY IDEA

While the NDP provides general guidelines for framing new policy ideas, many ministries and other state institutions have laid out their own plans and policies. As an example of the shift in policy discourses, here I describe and analyze the National Plan for Equality of Opportunities (*Plan Nacional para la Igualdad de Oportunidades: Mujeres construyendo la nueva Bolivia para Vivir Bien [PNIO]*, 2008) which provides the framework for discussing gender equality and women’s rights. Most specifically I am interested in the inclusion of indigenous ideas to the state gender policy. Crucial here is the notion of *chacha-warmi* (Quechua) and *qhari-warmi* (Aymara) that is used to describe gender relations among Andean indigenous peoples.

Discussing the thematic of gender policy is interesting because, especially since the mid-1990s when identity concerns became prevalent in development discourses, there has been a major conflict in Bolivia between those promoting gender equality and those

promoting indigenous issues (Paulson and Calla 2000). Indigenous intellectuals and activists have long proclaimed that there are so many particularities in indigenous gender systems that questions of equality and rights cannot be properly assessed through the tools of Western feminism which is often demonized as part of Western imperialism. Western feminism (typically understood in the singular) is accused of bringing modes of universal womanhood based on liberal individualism into contexts where gender relations are rather built on indigenous community principles of complementarity. For their part, feminist NGOs and gender experts have tended to equate gender inequalities with indigenous cultures that have often been seen as unmodern, backwards and discriminatory towards women. Paulson and Calla have described this tension by taking as an example a specific gender technique: “The opponents of modern development see gender analysis as an imperialist tool for annihilating unique, complementary and harmonious identities and relationships, while development partisans see gender analysis as a positive tool for democratizing discriminatory local identities and relationships” (2000: 128).

An example of these contentious and conflictive discourses follows. When I worked at one of the UN agencies in La Paz in 2002, we organized a meeting for the then presidential candidates in order to hear their views on gender issues. The only presidential candidate who participated was Evo Morales, who provoked the predominantly urban, middle and upper-class female audience with his charismatic presence and a stance according to which concerns for gender equality are the creations of Western capitalism. In the Andean world, in his opinion, women and men have complementary roles that are not hierarchically positioned as unequal. If there are signs of inequality, it is, he stated, caused by capitalism.

Morales’ vision was based on the indigenous idea of *chacha-warmi* which refers to female and male complementarity<sup>43</sup> and the gendered nature of the cosmological order (meaning that all physical, social and spiritual entities have male and/or female characteristics). The idea of *chacha-warmi* has long been studied by Andean anthropologists and indigenous intellectuals (Arnold ed. 1997; Burman 2011; Estermann 2006; Harris 1982; Medina 2006; Spedding 1994; Yampara 2001) and politicized by indigenous movements and NGOs. In anthropological debates, gender complementarity refers to separate, but interrelated spheres for women and men that are not necessarily vertically structured in a hierarchical way (Assmuth and Tapaninen 1994). The idea of gender complementarity is semantically inherent in the concepts of *qhari-warmi* (man-woman) in Aymara and *chacha-warmi* (man-woman) in Quechua: conceptually gender

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43 Because of the long historical process of religious syncretism between indigenous beliefs and the Catholic religion in Bolivia, the notion of gender complementarity is not necessarily “purely” indigenous, but has rather intermingled with the Catholic understandings of proper gender relations, including the notion of separate, yet complementary, roles between men and women (Chambi 2011: 80–1; on Andean religious syncretism, see, for example, Spedding 2008).

refers to the unity of two parts – a pair consisting of a man and a woman (Medina 2006: 261). In Andean cosmologies, it is understood that each person has both feminine and masculine attributes and a person is complete only as a unity of a man and a woman (see, for example, Arnold ed. 1997). In Aymara social structures, for example, the unity of a man/woman pair is an essential element, as a person becomes *jaqi*, an adult, or a human being only through marriage (Estermann 2006: 65).<sup>44</sup> Harris, for example, has noted that for the Aymara “sexual parallelism and complementarity is fundamental to the way that authority is represented” (1982: 48). Many indigenous NGOs and social movements widely share the idea that in indigenous communities, gender relations are complementary which is often translated as the same as equality. CONAMAQ, for example, relies on the notion of *chacha-warmi* in its institutional structure and decision-making processes.<sup>45</sup> The idea of *chacha-warmi* is also implicitly present in the post-2009 governmental decision according to which there has to be an equal representation of men and women in public positions such as ministers and members of the Constitutional Court.

Now the notion of *chacha-warmi* has started to play a role in the political discourses and policy documents of the state. It was said to be the result of intense negotiations with various NGOs, social movements, and indigenous organizations that *chacha-warmi* appeared on the policy agenda. Indeed, Farah and Sánchez (2008: 41) have suggested that

44 See Albó's (2011: 134) discussion of *jaqichasiña*, marriage, as the making of the person. Deviation from these community norms, as would occur for example in the case of homosexuality, would therefore destroy the harmony and balance of natural course of the social organization. The person would not be able to achieve complete social identity and would cause social and cosmic imbalance to the community, because of his/her “lack of completion” (Harris 1982: 63).

45 In other cases, the idea of *chacha-warmi* is merely discursive, as was clear in the practices of an indigenous NGO in which I worked in 2001. Male leaders of the organization emphasized gender complementarity as an important principle in indigenous communities, and demonized Western feminism. Yet there were not many signs of gender complementarity, let alone equality, within the NGO itself. Another question is whether in rural communities where the NGO (and I) worked, these practices were part of the everyday experiences of both men and women (see other examples, Burman 2011; Chambi 2011). I remember vividly my first visit to an Aymara community in the region of Bautista Saavedra, better known as the region of the traditional *kallawaya* healers. It was like a textbook example of structuralist anthropology. When I, for example, participated in community dinners or meetings, images of dual structures of Amazonian indigenous peoples in Lévi-Strauss' book *Tristes Tropiques* (1997[1955]) were flashing through my mind. As in the Brazilian Boroto communities that Lévi-Strauss visited, Aymara peoples in these communities organized themselves spatially in full circles where women sat on the floor on one side (left, of course) and men on the other side. During dinners, men sat on benches in the courtyard of the community's centre waiting for women to fill in the circle. Carrying heavy pans of soup made of llama meat, vegetables, and oats, women sat on the soil in a half circle and started to serve the food that their husbands carried to each person in the circle. While in community meetings, I observed men to be located in a half circle in the front part of the meeting hall, while women sat on the floor in a half circle at the back of the (school) hall. I, a foreign woman on the scene, was an anomaly, another anthropological textbook example. As a *mujer en pantalones*, “woman wearing trousers”, I was seated among the men during both dinners and community meetings. It is not in the scope of this study to make judgements on whether complementarity equals equality or not, but I want to underline that although that is possible, and has indeed been witnessed by many scholars, gender relations in Bolivia are plural and vary notably between distinct communities, regions, groups of people, families, and individuals. There is no single Andean system of (equal) gender relations, as there is no single Western system of gender relations.



the upsurge of indigenous politics has generated a crisis of feminism and its organizational structures in Bolivia: until recently, non-indigenous, middle and upper-class women's NGOs represented the country's feminist discourses in a quite hegemonic manner. Today, indigenous and peasant women's organizations are increasingly raising the question of whether these feminist agendas have been able to represent them, or rather solely those women in the echelons of state power (Monasterios 2007; Ranta-Owusu 2010b; Rousseau 2011).

Yet while the concept is brought up by many male politicians and activists, and it is mentioned in the title of the National Plan of Equality of Opportunities through reference to *vivir bien*, policies regarding gender, however, hesitate to make issues of indigeneity the leading framework. The PNIO states that it is important to demystify the meaning of gender complementarity as a category of reality, because as a concept it tends to hide the everyday conditions of men and women in indigenous communities, and therefore it may "naturalize" unequal gender relations. Indeed, anthropologists Assmuth and Tapaninen (1994: 153–5) have reminded us that gender complementarity does not automatically mean gender equality. Instead of taking the category of gender complementarity for granted, the PNIO suggests recovering it as a positive value, or as a creative anticipation of horizontal complementarity between men and women, in an attempt to decolonize the concept of gender from its development-oriented conceptual roots and its patriarchal practice among *both* non-indigenous and indigenous Bolivians (República de Bolivia 2008c: 33–4).

In demonstration of the latter, as mentioned in the PNIO and in my interviews with gender experts in the governing regime, it has been the experience that discourses of indigenous good life devalue questions of gender. The head of the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Generational Affairs<sup>46</sup>, institutionally situated under the Ministry of Justice, told me that they had not been invited to planning events or workshops held by the Ministry of Development Planning responsible for overall policy-making processes. Additionally, although Bolivia has signed various international conventions concerning gender equality and women's rights, the NDP disregards them (República de Bolivia 2008c: 15). While equity is a transversal theme in the NDP, it is, nevertheless, practically devoid of any mention of gender relations. It hesitates to draw any differences among indigenous peoples on the basis of any other significant category of identity than that of indigeneity. Indigenous peoples are portrayed as a homogeneous group, whose internal divisions and power relations are minimal, if not altogether absent. To some extent, the idea of *chacha-warmi* continues with this essentialist vision, as it draws on preconceived cultural principles of complementarity and harmony rather than on empirical case studies of indigenous men and women in different regions, cities, rural areas, and between different

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<sup>46</sup> Nowadays it is called the *Viceministerio de Igualdad de Oportunidades*.



social classes, indigenous groups and generations.

Gender experts at the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Generational Affairs identified themselves as left-wing actors that were critical both of patriarchal features of previous neoliberal gender policies *and* indigenous ideas of gender complementarity. The notion of *vivir bien* was, therefore, often interpreted from a left-wing perspective of class struggle. An officer at the Vice-Ministry of Gender expressed these ideas by saying:

I believe that *vivir bien* is a kind of a philosophy of life which means that we should live in conditions of equality in every possible way... This has been the struggle for feminist movements for at least twenty years now. What is new now is the concept of *vivir bien* which means that we should not only have equality between men and women or equality for women but that there should also be equality between social classes. This struggle between classes makes this government's gender policies different from earlier governments. If we say that we want to develop, to live better than we do now, we are making a difference. Some social classes have always lived better than others. What we want now is that everybody can live a good life.

Consequently, the main aims of the PNIO, institutionally situated under *Bolivia Digna* of the NDP, were to enhance equal access to public services, equal participation in decision-making, equal distribution of economic, technological, and other resources, the abolition of gender violence, and the institutional strengthening of gender issues. Content-wise, the PNIO was divided into five fields of action, namely body, space, time, movements, and memory. The notion of 'body' referred to alimentation, sexual and reproductive self-determination, and a stand against violence.<sup>47</sup> 'Space' referred to community, land, security, autonomy, and sovereignty; that is, themes clearly influenced by both indigenous claims for lands and territories and left-wing demands for the control of means of production. 'Time' implied the recognition of women's invisible labor, the recognition of life, and the valuation of everyday practices. 'Movements' was about mobilization, political activity, and solidarity between groups of people, and recognition of the increasing role of social movements and indigenous organizations in the political sphere. The last field of action was 'memory' which was about knowledge and identity. Through these five fields of action, the plan aims to take down patriarchal, colonial, and neoliberal structures, institutions, and practices that transgress the ethos of the Bolivian

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<sup>47</sup> Indigenous movements have often resisted sexual rights on the basis of a claim that they represent demographic attempts to limit the size and number of indigenous populations (of which various historical examples do exist), or that they would signal free exercise of immoral sexual practices. There is also a cultural belief that equates female fertility with the fertility of the land; reproduction with production (Harris 1982: 65). The feminist NGOs are promoting a law initiative to de-penalize abortion, which is resisted by women from Andean indigenous groups (Farah and Sánchez 2008: 82–4). This resistance to sexual rights has encountered an important ally in the Catholic Church and other conservative sectors including the traditional economic and political elite of the Bolivian lowlands. In early 2014, moderate changes were made to the 1972 Abortion Law in order to ease access to abortion in cases of rape, incest, or danger to woman's life.

state and society (República de Bolivia 2008c: 39–48).

Although, as I have argued elsewhere, there is a danger that the concept of *chacha-warmi* romanticizes the state of gender relations in indigenous communities (Ranta-Owusu 2010b), I want to underline that the importance of the idea as a state policy alternative stems from its challenge to universal development paradigms. Indigenous development ideas, such as *chacha-warmi*, as part of the overall *vivir bien* policy framework, reflect attempts to search for local and national alternatives. As has already become clear in the case of the NDP, the notion of *chacha-warmi* formulates part of the search for increasing sovereignty to decide over one's own development principles. This commonality aside, a plurality of views on how to frame the policy and how to govern through it emerges.

### 5.3 INDIGENOUS ELEMENTS IN THE LEGISLATION

On July 19<sup>th</sup> 2010, the Bolivian parliament approved the Law of Autonomies, one of a number of major laws approved during Morales' regime with the goal of improving the status of indigenous peoples in the country. The approval of the new Bolivian constitution (*Nueva Constitución Política del Estado, CPE*) in a referendum in January 2009 initiated wide-ranging legislative reform in order to reconstitute existing laws and to draft new ones. In addition to the earlier mentioned legal recognition of indigenous autonomous arrangements, recently approved laws include, for example, those that promote the recognition of traditional indigenous customary law and the obligatory representation of indigenous peoples in judicial, electoral, and legislative systems. It is, therefore, clear that indigenous elements have entered the Bolivian legislative and normative system. This is not to say that indigenous peoples were not recognized in earlier legislations. During the multicultural reforms of the mid-1990s, for example, a major part of the promotion of indigenous peoples rights occurred through legislative means. The contemporary situation parallels the case of Ecuador, where the notion of *buen vivir* is both mainstreamed, and specifically mentioned in 75 articles in the constitution approved in 2008 (Gudynas 2011a; Walsh 2010). The purpose of this section is to discuss whether, and how, the notion of *vivir bien* as an alternative development paradigm is reflected, and given normative support by the new constitution. The coherence of the constitutional view of the Bolivian state transformation process will also be questioned through the identification of its various inherent discourses.

But before analyzing indigenous terminologies, a few words are needed about the overall process of the Constituent Assembly. The 255 elected members of the Constituent Assembly started their work in Sucre in August 2006. On the advent of its convening, indigenous peoples named the assembly "*originario*", an example of the new arrival of indigenous traditional decision-making patterns. Superseding the powers of the governing

regime or the state, they conceptualized the assembly as Bolivia's "most sovereign authority and expression of the people's will". (Olivera et al. 2007: 17.) Although the initial idea was to establish an organ of direct democracy that would represent social movements and indigenous peoples directly and would channel "the true will of the people", it soon became clear that the Constituent Assembly had become a battlefield between the two main political parties and within and among smaller political parties and groupings (Gamarra 2007; Zalles 2008). In comparison to what was intended by social movements, it was "a poor substitute, indeed more reminiscent of the proceedings of the existing liberal congress than a participatory and revolutionary rupture with the status quo" (Webber 2011: 232).

The MAS did not have the necessary two-thirds majority to promote questions of land reform and indigenous self-governance that were fiercely resisted by PODEMOS and lowlands oppositional activists. As a result, the MAS had to sacrifice many of its goals (Postero 2013: 43–4). To take an example, while the constitution does limit the size of land that individuals can own, it does so prospectively, thus leaving current land ownership intact (ibid.). Furthermore, the opposition co-opted indigenous demands for territorial self-governance in order to push forward their own ideas of regional autonomy (Olivera et al. 2007: 11; for more details see Chapter Eight). As the work of the Constituent Assembly was truncated, the executive interfered with the process, thus compromising its autonomy (Toranzo 2006: 10). In 2008, negotiations over the constitution were shifted to Cochabamba where the MAS and lowlands oppositional leaders came up with a compromise that was later ratified by the Bolivian parliament (Regalsky 2010: 37). This was a major disappointment to many movement activists and indigenous representatives, because the idea of the constituent assembly has a long history in Bolivia. It emerged in activist agendas as early as the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity during which lowlands indigenous peoples demanded it be organized in order to enhance indigenous citizenship and participation (Albó 2008). It was later widely advocated during the Cochabamba Water War as the creation of new forms of democratic decision-making arenas (Olivera 2004: 133–9). Additionally, it was discussed in the 2002 presidential elections during which Morales skyrocketed into second place (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 87). In 2003, the coalition of social movements, indigenous organizations, and trade unions demanded the organization of the *Asamblea Constituyente Popular y de las Naciones Originarias* (Manifiesto del Estado Mayor del Pueblo Boliviano 2003).

In regards to indigenous terminologies: to begin with, the new Constitution defines as major guiding principles and/or values of the state (or, as 'ethical-moral principles of the plural society') the following aspects of *vivir bien*, collected from Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní belief systems: *ama qhilla*, *ama llulla*, *ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar, don't be a thief), *suma qamaña* (to live well), *ñandereko* (harmonious way of life), *teko*

*kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil), and *qhapañ ñan* (noble way or path). The same article continues with a list of values that the Bolivian state is committed to promote in order for its citizens ‘to live well’ (*vivir bien*). These values include equality, solidarity and redistribution of resources; reciprocity, complementarity, harmony and equilibrium; justice, transparency and gender equity among others. (República de Bolivia 2008a: 14.)

After embarking on the idea that *vivir bien* constitutes the overarching principle and value system for the Bolivian state (or ‘plural society’), the notion unexpectedly vanishes. Curiously enough, it is absent from the normative framing of the rights of indigenous peoples and nations (*naciones*), a term that cuts across the whole constitution and comprises, according to Albó and Romero (2009), the most innovative aspect of the whole text. In addition to the Bolivian nation-state, indigenous peoples are constantly discussed in the framework of their own nations. In the paragraphs on indigenous peoples’ and indigenous nations’ rights, it is stated that within the framework of national unity and the coherence of the state, indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and territories; to the respect and promotion of traditional indigenous knowledge and science; to the exercise of their own political, judicial, and economic systems according to their own worldviews (*cosmovisiones*); to indigenous territorial autonomies; and to the control of renewable natural resources on those areas, among other rights.

The notion of *vivir bien* appears again in the articles that discuss education. Article 78 states that education will be “united, public, universal, democratic, participatory, communitarian, decolonizing and of quality”. It is also supposed to be intercultural, plurilingual, territorial, revolutionary, and liberating, among other features. It is noted that the educational system will promote the ethical-moral principles of the state that, according to the earlier mentioned excerpts, concentrate on different aspects of indigenous worldviews and cosmological principles. Yet the notion of *vivir bien* is explicitly mentioned solely in reference to indigenous peoples’ environmental knowledge: “Education is oriented towards...the conservation and protection of the environment, biodiversity, and territory for good life (*vivir bien*)” (República de Bolivia 2008a: 35–6). Ignoring social and political aspects of *vivir bien*, it is here linked with the most easily identifiable forms of indigenous knowledge such as knowledge of plants, animals, and soils: a view typically held by development scholars of indigenous knowledge, criticized in the theoretical chapter of this study. The notion of *vivir bien* is absent from part two and three of the constitution that discuss the structure and institutions of the state, and the territorial structure and organization of the state respectively.

The fourth part, which discusses the economic system of the state (*Estructura y Organización Económica del Estado*), starts with the statement that “the Bolivian economic model is plural and oriented towards improving the quality of life and achieving good life (*vivir bien*) for all Bolivian women and men” (República de Bolivia 2008a: 117). It is later stated that a “social and community economy will complement individual interests with

collective good life (*vivir bien colectivo*)” (ibid.). In terms of concrete political economy changes, the constitution is, therefore, bringing to the fore the questioning of the global market economy as the sole economic option. In the name of pluralism, community and state-led economic models and practices are recognized. Here, however, one may recall that the NDP criticized the equating of the notion of development solely with economic aspects. Yet the correlation in the constitution of the notion of *vivir bien* with the restructuring of the Bolivian economy makes one wonder whether development continues to be equated with economic development despite the contrary arguments stressing the importance of spiritual, cultural, and social aspects of good life. This view is, indeed, strengthened in Article 313 which states that to eliminate poverty and economic exclusion in order to achieve good life (*para el logro del vivir bien*), the Bolivian economy has to be organized to produce and redistribute economic surplus in a just way; to reduce inequalities in the access to productive resources; to reduce regional inequalities; to industrialize natural resources; and to promote active participation of public sector and communities in the productive apparatus. Here *vivir bien* becomes a signifier for the changing – and more active – economic role of the state: the revival of state regulation, rather than an indigenous alternative to understanding development as a broader category than mere economic change.

Even though the notion of *vivir bien* does not appear frequently in the constitution, we may find several paragraphs that enhance the decolonization of state structures, institutions, and practices. With regards the division of powers within the state, Tapia (2007: 65–6) has argued that the introduction of the new constitution was successful in shaking up the liberal foundations of the judicial and legislative powers, while traditionally centralized executive powers were left intact or made even stronger. Indeed, the constitution recognizes indigenous justice systems (*justicia indigena originaria campesina*) exercised by indigenous nations through their traditional authorities as equal and complementary to the liberal system of justice. In the sphere of legislative powers, the constitution states that while a proportion of the parliamentarians are elected through liberal party politics, in such departments where minority indigenous groups reside in rural areas there is a special indigenous constituency. As a result, these decolonizing reforms in judicial and legislative spheres can be said to have an impact on the legal and political participation of indigenous peoples. While community traditions have been brought in to complement liberal forms in the above mentioned sectors, the constitution does not show signs of decentralizing executive powers. Ideally, if a new model for governing was taken from historical examples of governance in Andean communities, political decisions would be made on the basis of the widest possible participation, deliberation, and consensus between community members (Harris 1982; Medina 2008; Yampara 2001). On the contrary, Tapia (2007: 66) argues that the constitution seems to strengthen the role of the president and emphasize majority rule which, in a country with more than thirty indigenous minority groups, is

not apt to make plural voices heard.

As stated above, the indigenous idea of *vivir bien* is claimed to represent a unifying ethical-moral principle of the state. Due to political compromise between the internally heterogeneous MAS and the lowlands elites through the right-wing PODEMOS (also a political party with diverse strands of political thinking and action), ideas and concepts in the constitutional text represent various political discourses and ideologies (Postero 2013; Vega 2011). The constitutional process was seen by many as a demonstration of a class struggle between owning classes from wealthy lowlands regions of the so-called *media luna* (named after the shape of the region) and indigenous and left-wing followers of the governing regime (Morales 2013). According to Morales (2013: 67):

On the one hand, there was the established model of limited neoliberal democracy based on a capitalist, private-sector-dominated economy and an elitist party-controlled political order. On the other, there was Morales' more inclusive socialist and populist model of a state-directed, social welfare economy and a pro-indigenous, citizens-based, social movement democracy.

However, within the MAS itself, different tendencies emerged: some promoting decolonizing practices, others centralization, as indicated, for example, in the stronger role of the president and in allowing presidential re-election, unlike in previous constitutions (Tapia 2007). Furthermore, indigenous ideas were complemented not solely by left-wing ideals of equality, solidarity, and redistribution of resources but first and foremost the strengthening of the role of the state. At least three different discourses of social change which are difficult to combine are, therefore, displayed in the new constitution.

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined the notion of *vivir bien* as a new policy framework, or 'government', based on indigenous ideas. What unifies most actors is criticism of economic globalization and Western-style development. In the attempt to find a unifying state discourse, the idea of *vivir bien* as an alternative development paradigm to those development ideas and models brought from abroad and above is shared, and cherished, by most ministers and public servants. It is considered that the notion of *vivir bien* challenges technical and depoliticizing linear models of growth and progress inherent in SAPs, PRSPs, and other development models that claim universality across a variety of contexts. The notion of good life rather emphasizes local solutions to development problems, drawing on local – and nationally meaningful – ideas. Through this, the sovereignty of the Bolivian state *vis-à-vis* IFIs, development agencies and transnational corporations is emphasized. Thereby, the notion of good life offers a legitimate discursive

tool for tackling neoliberal colonialism mentioned in the NDP through, for example, the elimination of development conditionalities, the recovery of national decision-making on development policy, and the enhancement of the role of the state in social and economic affairs and therefore also in development affairs. However, criticism has been made of whether the underlying political economy, most specifically the question of income redistribution, land ownership, dependency on the extractive economy, and the role of transnational corporations therein, has, in fact, undergone change.

The unification of multiple political ideas and demands into a common national project is part of policy making. In discussing how the state establishes its assumed unity, Mitchell has argued that “beyond the practical multiplicity of tactics, disciplines, and powers, the state articulates a national project that projects its unity onto society” (1999: 88–9). Yet despite the unifying quality of indigenous ideas as the discourse of the state, both questions of national sovereignty *and* indigenous sovereignty seem to be discussed in the name of good life. Consequently, the potential for contradictions emerges. The so-called indigenous culturalists tend to promote the importance of indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews (and indigenous self-governance), while left-wing actors tend to promote the strengthening of the role of the state in social and economic affairs, thereby emphasizing the question of national sovereignty. The new constitution, for its part, does not solely reflect the internal heterogeneity of indigenous culturalists and left-wing actors within the MAS. As the result of negotiations with the lowlands elites, it also expresses the interests of the right-wing political opposition.

The governing MAS, as a conglomeration of social movements, as well as various intellectual strands, left-wing actors of many sorts, and NGO activists, is a receptacle for multiple – and often competing and even conflicting – political ideas. It is here that my conceptual framing of the notion of ‘governing pluralities’ is highly applicable: plural political formations are indeed governing the state. The state and its governing tools – policies and legislation – have become instruments of change: through policy making and constitutional reforms, ‘governing pluralities’ are, paradoxically, using the state as a channel to change the governing of the state. The nation-state that matters for indigenous experience is a radically altered one of plural formations: one that is both an object and an instrument of change. The crucial question here is whether these multiple ideas that are often intimately related to identity concerns and resource struggles are articulated and in mutual cooperation, or whether competition and conflicts for power will become overpowering.

In the following chapters, I move into tackling this question through examination of the translation of policy into practice; that is, the practice of government.



**PART III:  
DISCIPLINED MASSES:  
VIVIR BIEN AS CONTESTED PRACTICE**





## 6 “COLONIALISM STRIKES BACK”: TRANSLATING VIVIR BIEN INTO BUREAUCRATIC PRACTICE AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

This chapter will shift attention from indigenous discourses of cultural difference and state policy discourses to their translation into bureaucratic practice, following the notion of *vivir bien* to the sphere of public servants and consultants. The question of the practice of government touches upon the institutionalization of change. How are institutional traditions and practices transformed along the lines of new, radically democratizing and decolonizing indigenous discourses? How are theories and concepts made into governmental practice in the everyday actions of ministers, public servants, and consultants? And, indeed, this translation is a challenge which is well recognized by political actors such as Aguirre who, despite his political and ideological commitment to enhancing indigenous ideas, was deeply concerned about the translation of political discourses into bureaucratic practice. Aguirre explained that:

We know that we do not solely have to construct the philosophy...of *vivir bien* but, fundamentally, we know that we also have to construct a new model of development planning. Therefore, the notion of *vivir bien* has to have both a technical and instrumental side, as well as a political and ideological side. And this is our challenge. To combine the technical and the political is difficult; it is very complicated. It would be easier to follow what has already been written; what has already been worked upon before...But this is not what we want. We rather want to do something that has never been done before.

This juxtaposition between ‘political fiction’ and ‘technocratic fiction’ has long characterized the Bolivian state (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 41). Mosse has argued that “the logic of political mobilization and the logic of operations are different” (2005: 16). To put it another way: institutional traditions develop within organizations as, “bureaucracies are instruments of power that take on lives of their own” (Heyman 2004: 489). Bureaucratic practices are seldom a direct result of new or existing policy discourses, but they rather tend to function according to other logics, such as the maintenance of institutional relationships, hierarchies, and administrative order (Mosse 2005). The rupture between indigenous ideas and bureaucratic practice also has theoretical implications. As Rose (1996) has suggested, policy principles or policy goals can be considered governmental (that is, as internalized ways of acting and behaving

according to certain principles), rather than merely conceptual or theoretical, when they are translated into practice.

The practice of government, as defined by Li (2007), emerges through the translation of government into concrete bureaucratic programs and projects. This, as I have explained before, requires, according to Li, two things: the first is the identification of a problem that needs to be solved; the second is the construction of technical expertise through which the problem can be addressed and solved. In modern societies, experts are of fundamental importance in institutionalizing forms of governing, and controlling individuals and groups of people through specific forms of knowledge and professional skills (Burchell 1996; Kaisto and Pykkönen 2010; Mitchell 1999; Rose 1996). With neoliberal governmentality, this knowledge production and technical assessment of improvement was increasingly placed in the hands of transnational actors such as IFIs and development agencies (Ferguson and Gupta 2005). As a result, as Li (2007) and Ferguson (1994) have shown, development problems have often been identified according to the available expert technical solutions. This has effectively excluded locally important political questions from the palette of aid interventions.

Yet in contemporary Bolivia, the opposite has occurred. What is radically new is that the process of decolonization of the state not only aims to open the state to previously marginalized peoples through new conceptual thinking, indigenous epistemologies, and alternative knowledge orientations, but in doing so, it also challenges the technical expert regimes and authority of public servants by condemning them as remnants of neoliberal colonialism. This is where the theoretical consideration emerges. If the notion of *vivir bien* as a new form of government is about to succeed, something that is radically political needs to be tamed into bureaucratic practice.

In the following sections, encounters between discursive and political aspects of the notion of *vivir bien* with bureaucratic practice and technical expertise are examined. Through ethnographic examples of policy events, workshops, and meetings between indigenous activists, ministers, consultants and public servants, I shed light on the challenging task of transforming the notion of *vivir bien* into a technical framework with corresponding plans, programs, and projects. The following examination of perceptions, ideas, and practices of public servants reveals that various interests emerge and collide, making the process of putting new conceptual ideas into practice a very diverse and complex matter. It will be shown that, to a large extent, Bolivian bureaucratic logics differ from discursive and ideological framings of state transformation.

## 6.1 CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

### 6.1.1 The Making of Sectoral Plans

On a chilly, misty, early-November morning I joined a buzzing crowd of public servants on the doorsteps of the Ministry of Development Planning at the upper end of the Prado. I was about to catch a bus that would take planning directors and public servants from various ministries to the rugged and impoverished indigenous neighborhood of Chasquipampa up in the hills at the outskirts of the wealthy southern zone of the capital. During the last months of 2008, the Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination organized a series of workshops in order to facilitate and coordinate the elaboration of sectoral development plans. Each of the four pillars of the NDP contained various sectors and each was to have its own sectoral development plan. The first two-day sectoral workshop, where we were heading now, was called *Taller de Metodología para la Elaboración de Planes Sectoriales de Desarrollo*, and it concentrated on defining vision, focus areas (*ejes de desarrollo*), and strategic development objectives for the sectors. A similar two-day workshop in late November, for its part, focused on budgeting and on the creation of indicators for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

The workshop location in Chasquipampa was a large two-storey conference center, whose second floor auditorium held approximately one hundred public servants and sectoral stakeholders of various kinds (such as university professors for the sector of education, policemen and military personnel for the sectors of security and defense respectively, and so forth). Most of the people appeared to be male, urban and middle class, some in suits, some in more informal jeans and sneakers. There were also some female public servants, especially among young sectoral consultants. Aguirre opened the workshop with a presentation in which he emphasized the importance of obtaining concrete results instead of producing more and more discourses. “In the beginning, we [of the executive] were able to say that we don’t have experience in state administration,” he said, and continued forcefully, “but now, now we have experience and we need to do something concrete.” With this sentence Aguirre admitted that there had been problems and inefficiencies in concrete policy execution. But now they were about to make a difference. Therefore, each sector had to become aligned with one of the strategic pillars of the NDP and with the indigenous notion of *vivir bien*, while at the same time, work at the level of sectors and strategic pillars could have an effect on the formulation of the logics of *vivir bien*, as Aguirre suggested through the use of the Figure I.

**Figure 1.** Articulation between different levels of development planning.



Aguirre suggested that each sector should use the workshop hours to analyze its own position towards the notion of *vivir bien* as a new development paradigm. Then sectors could go on discussing the possible vision for their sectors defined by Aguirre as the following:

A realistic and objectively calculable future situation for the state, society, target population, and the sector itself as a result of the actions of the sector that are conducted in the framework of its political and social mandate. It is based on agreements between different actors, institutions, and social organizations with shared values, principles, and ideals that promote and inspire commitment towards change.

Afterwards, the sectors were advised to define focus areas and strategic development objectives under which concrete programs and projects would be designed. Sectoral focus areas (*ejes de desarrollo sectorial*) were defined by Aguirre as “those fundamental elements that summarize the most important components of the sectoral development vision”. A strategic objective was defined as:

An expected change that the sector is supposed to achieve in favor of the population. It is based on focus areas, potentialities, and problems of the sector. An objective is supposed to be short, simple, and straightforward, and it should express the expected change unambiguously. It has to be clear, specific (especially in its qualitative aspects), concrete, measurable, and verifiable. It should be ambitious, yet realistic and achievable.

Ultimately, the development planning techniques that Aguirre presented resembled universally applicable development techniques, such as those of program or project cycle, and logical frameworks approaches (LFAs) typical of development planning. It has been argued that these kinds of development techniques are used in development policy planning to portray “the rationality (and manageability) of a scheme with logically related and technically specified activities, measurable outputs, an ordered sequence and the functional integration of different components and institutional actors” (Mosse 2005: 38). These were the exact techniques that indigenous activists and movements have often criticized because, in their opinion, these kinds of models and technical framings of problems and solutions are based on Western ideas of linear progress and causal logics; logics which, in their opinion, are the opposite of indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews (Gudynas 2011a: 445; Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 226). In his development critique, Escobar has, for example, noted that this kind of planning approach “gives the impression that policy is the result of discrete, voluntaristic acts, not the process of coming to terms with conflicting interests and worldviews, in the course of which choices are made and exclusions effected” (1991: 667). Yet it appeared that the elaboration of sectoral plans within the framework of *vivir bien* relied on knowledge and logics typical of bureaucratic practice that are “explicit, codified, recognized as such and expressible... as rules [and] norms” (Mosse 2005: 83). Conflicting interests and worldviews were not discussed despite the overt political criticism of previous development planning.

Thus a contradiction had been established between indigenous policy discourses and concrete bureaucratic practice, which was very apparent in the views of public servants sitting in the audience. Commentaries made by public servants in the workshop strongly criticized the lack of clear planning, coordination, and guidance for public servants and institutions; they found it difficult to identify what they were supposed to do and in what direction and for what ends they were supposed to direct their work. They expressed the view that they needed more technical guidance and less politics. Most probably, they felt the insecurity of not having an identifiable problem that they could solve with their fixed palette of expertise. Escobar, for example, has noted that the assignment of expertise has usually been based on the identification of “people as a problem....in such a way that some development program has to be accepted as a legitimate solution” (1991: 667). If neoliberal colonialism as was suggested in the Chapter Five was now identified as the problem to be solved, the attention of expertise was detached from the poor and their inherent qualities. It was rather transferred to the “non-poor” and structural global inequalities, that is, to issues of power that have usually been out of the picture in development discourses (Escobar 1991; Ferguson 1994; Li 2007). Therefore, public servants felt that their institutional traditions and technical expertise had been disrupted without their being offered clear guidelines for new institutional restructuring and technical management.

In his response to criticism, Aguirre underlined that the question was not about how to develop state institutions or how to define institutional strategies, but how to respond to the political and social demands of social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions. He thereby reminded public servants that all technical work within the sectors had to respond to such political priorities as the notion of indigenous good life, decolonization, and resistance to neoliberal colonialism. After all, “the government does not want minor reforms but real transformations”, he concluded. Therefore, as political leader, he was balancing between politically set goals of radical revolutionary change, a new beginning, and existing bureaucratic practice that, on the one hand, should be decolonized, and on the other, function as the basis for the institutionalization of indigenous ideas through technical means. His use of existing development techniques illustrated a tendency to institutionalize new political and indigenous discourses on the basis of existing state institutions and practices. Aguirre was conscious about the contradiction when he stated:

Although many of us know what is meant by the notion of *vivir bien*, from time to time it betrays us. Colonialism [*colonialismo*] strikes back, and starts to function in our heads and bodies... It is an eternal battle in our heads and hearts to make a difference [between earlier development models and the new one]. When we are constructing the new paradigm, sometimes the old [habits] come back because they are easy [to implement].

In this statement, Aguirre identified previous development models and techniques with the colonality of the state. Yet he also noted that the same colonality lives on as internalized ways of being and doing in everyone who is trying to work with the new terminologies and epistemologies. By stating this, Aguirre came to terms with what Escobar (1995) has written about overwhelming power of development discourse. Although there is a political commitment to think outside the box of neoliberal schemes of improvement, there is a difficulty in the practice of government to “move away from conventional Western modes of knowing...in order to make room for other types of knowledge and experience” (ibid.: 216). “The transformation in the order of discourse”, that Escobar calls for, is not sufficient; rather shifts in concrete technical exercise of development are needed.

### **6.1.2 Vivir Bien as an Ambiguous Concept**

If some public servants at the sectoral workshop complained about the failure to render indigenous policy ideas into a technical agenda, others complained about the exact opposite: they noted that too much technicality would change the essence of indigenous ideas. Instead of demanding clearer technical guidelines for the translation of indigenous ideas into bureaucratic practice, they expressed concerns about traditional bureaucratic means.

One of the public servants commented to Aguirre that, according to his understanding, the notion of *vivir bien* is not a “mechanistic neoclassical term” that could be applied and measured in bureaucratic planning in a similar way to universally disseminated policy concepts. Another public servant joined him and suggested that, as public servants and policy actors, they “should not fall into *mecanicismo*”: mechanistic application of the notion of *vivir bien* which, in his opinion, rather referred to concrete life experiences of indigenous peoples in rural communities. By claiming that instead of being an achievable and measurable development goal, the notion of *vivir bien* signifies and symbolizes indigenous life (*vivencia*) itself, he (unconsciously) struck at the core of the criticism that many anthropologists and development researchers have made of indigenous policies. Scholars of indigenous knowledge, for example, have noted that when indigenous issues are raised as a policy concern, they are de-contextualized and extracted from their local cultural contexts. This is problematic because the solutions that indigenous knowledge is supposed to bring to development are, by definition, local (Ellen and Harris 2000; Pottier 2003). One manager of the Planning Unit at the Ministry of Development Planning expressed these concerns later to me in an interview in the following way:

The difficulty is the concept of *vivir bien* itself. In the NDP it appears as a very general concept whereas in real-life there are various ways of thought and action that can be considered part of the idea of *vivir bien* in different cultures and geographic areas. Although [as a state policy] it appears as a specific way of thinking, as a general philosophy, in reality it is a very diverse concept. The difficulty is that we have to construct *vivir bien* as a paradigm of development for the country, but for others it is their life experience as such. One Aymara intellectual from *Taller Oral Andino* expressed this to me by saying that “for us *vivir bien* is everyday life (*para nosotros el vivir bien es el día a día*)”. Solidarity, complementarity, and harmony with nature are integral parts of everyday life experiences in small indigenous communities but to take them to the level of the state is a problem. In urban environments reciprocity, complementarity, and solidarity have been lost; individualism, competitiveness, and productivity rather predominate. So, for some [*vivir bien*] is the practice of life itself, but for us as public servants it is something that we have to examine, classify, and construct...In terms of development planning, it is not clear how to work with these diverse practices and life experiences [of indigenous peoples]. In order to plan, we have to have a clear change in mind; we have to have development objectives, programs, and projects that can be operationalized. If we do not have concrete changes in mind; if the concept [of *vivir bien*] is not clear, we cannot work.

In this quote, the manager crystallized anxieties and challenges that public servants faced in their attempts to work with the new development paradigm. The lack of a centralized indigenous agenda through which to apply common policy frameworks has been identified elsewhere as well. Niezen, for example, has suggested that “notwithstanding a few widely prevailing notions of indigenous peoples’ innate environmental wisdom, what really sets this cultural movement apart is its absence of centralized dogma” (2003: 13). As was explained in Chapter Four, the notion of *vivir bien* has arisen from indigenous

criticism of Western development discourses that, according to many indigenous activists and intellectuals, have concentrated on indigenous issues as “development problems”. With the notion of good life, this negative idea that indigenous peoples are always lacking something – more education, better health, in general more development – was transformed into a source of strength and aspiration. Yet from the point of view of public servants, this politically important aspect meant that new policy ideas were not represented as a problem needing to be fixed – a condition requiring technical and bureaucratic exercise (Ferguson 1994). Instead, the notion of good life appeared as a goal towards which to aspire, or even as an already existing state of affairs. Therefore, it was not clear what public servants should do and with what means. To give an example: one person from the ministry in charge of nationalizations commented to me that “it has now become clear to me that we have to do everything in the name of *vivir bien*. You can ask me what it means, but I don’t know what to answer you.”

This has led into a situation in which public servants interpret and apply the notion of good life through their own professional points of view, academic expertise, and technical capacities. A public servant from the Ministry of Education, for example, defined it to me as the satisfaction of basic needs and as an access to education, health, and housing. Another public servant from the health sector expressed that although indigenous life experiences were foreign to him, he could, nevertheless, relate to some ideals that were akin to his own rather conservative thinking. Public servants, therefore, identified those bits and pieces of the notion of *vivir bien* that were familiar to them. During the period of my fieldwork, the notion of *vivir bien* provided a battlefield of meanings. Valentin Ticona Colque, the Vice-Minister of Community Justice<sup>48</sup>, gave me an example of this in his own field: human rights and justice:

*Vivir bien* is a Spanish translation. And sometimes concepts make us fight with each other; they bring us difficulties and problems in this process [of change]...So, the problem resides in the concept: how does one understand it? Here [in the state administration] one talks mostly about human rights, but when we [the indigenous peoples] talk about communal justice, indigenous justice, or a judicial system for indigenous peoples, we are rather talking about *vivir bien*, which means cosmic rights (*derechos cósmicos*<sup>49</sup>). We should discuss these concepts profoundly; one should understand what we [the Aymara] really mean with the concept *suma qamaña*...We are trying to reconstruct these principles and values that still exist today among indigenous peoples so that they could serve for the whole society, for the whole country. We understand *vivir bien* as *suma qamaña*...

48 After the approval of the new constitution, the Vice-Ministry was renamed *Viceministerio de Justicia Indígena-Originaria-Campesina*.

49 Here he refers to the rights of humans but also of nature, plants, animals, soils, Gods, and spirits that surround human beings. Bolivia is, for example, the first country in the world to have ratified a law on the rights of the Mother Earth, *pachamama*, in 2010. The law lists such rights as right to life, water, diversity, and balance. See Evo Morales’ speeches on the rights of the Mother Earth (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010).



Ticona's point here was that the notion of *vivir bien* as it is used today in policy discourses and practice leaves too much room for interpretation, which causes confusion and conflicts. As a Spanish translation, the notion of *vivir bien* does not necessarily capture all those elements that its indigenous advocates promote. A "proper" understanding of *suma qamaña* as an Aymara idea, worldview, or a way of life is not, therefore, translated into governmental practice, and the notion of *vivir bien* has, therefore, become an extremely ambiguous term, accommodating diverse – and even contradictory – meanings. In this sense, this situation among public servants paralleled the interpretational ambiguity of MAS' political decision-makers with regards *vivir bien* as discussed in Chapter Five: if political messages varied between ministers in different ministries and institutions, it is hardly surprising that public servants had a hard time delivering a unified technical approach according to the new development discourse.

For Aguirre, one way to surpass the ambiguity was the use of clear technical planning tools. Sticking to traditional techniques of development and to the bureaucratic language spoken by public servants enabled Aguirre to direct public servants beyond the conceptual vagueness. Mosse has described this kind of tendency, typical to policy making, as "the art, first, of making a convincing argument and developing a causal model (relating inputs, outputs, and impacts)... validating higher policy goals, and, second, of bringing together diverse even incompatible interests" (2005: 15). Standard intervention models offered new – and inexperienced – political actors a tool to direct public servants with various interests towards a common effort.

### **6.1.3 Development Techniques as the Practice of Government**

In the second sectoral workshop at the end of November 2008, Flavio, a young technical consultant from the Ministry of Development Planning introduced guidelines for monitoring and evaluation which he had elaborated with the approval of the ministry's political leaders. The well-structured technical toolkit that he presented to the audience of public servants resembled those used by development agencies and NGOs worldwide, a reflection of his many years of work experience in donor agencies and donor-funded projects in Bolivian ministries. He explained the logics of monitoring and evaluation and gave guidelines for the formulation of indicators. As had been the case with the formulation of vision, focus areas, and objectives, it was emphasized here that sectoral indicators should be simple, practical, reliable, and unambiguous (*inequívoco*). They should "reflect directly and without ambiguity the progress made towards the chosen objectives". Flavio also said that they should be formulated in such a way that data on the progress of indicators could be gathered systematically. At the end of his presentation, Flavio gave an example of a desirable logical framework matrix that public servants were

supposed to formulate.

Although logical framework analysis (LFA), objective trees, indicators, and other standardized development techniques had been criticized by many indigenous scholars as reflections of Western linear thinking, they were, nevertheless, used in governmental practice. This was problematic as “standard intervention models and project cycles are designed to take out history, to exclude wider economic and political analysis, and to isolate project action from the continuous flow of social life” (Long 2001: 32). As such, this governmental practice represented a contradiction in terms of policy discourses because at the level of principle, the notion of *vivir bien* was exactly rooted in tackling wider economic, political, social, and cultural issues. Flavio commented on this in the following way:

These [sectoral] plans that are made now are not based on new solutions. There are some new interesting ideas that have been included in them but mostly there is nothing that is totally different than before. And, in my opinion, there shouldn't be. Standardized planning models have existed for long time... In theory, new things are nice but in practice what has happened is that many [sectoral] plans are copied from old plans. Only minor details have been added so that they would fit into the new structure [of *vivir bien*]. It is much easier to continue to do what one has always done than to change one's orientation.

This quotation reflected that there was a disinterest in creating new technical tools and planning mechanisms in response to decolonizing and democratizing policy agendas. In the practice of state bureaucracy, it was easier to lean on existing ways of doing things rather than challenging the prior forms of knowledge and technical expertise of public servants. Thus the incorporation of radical decolonizing indigenous ideas into bureaucratic practice was very much a work in progress that was constantly challenged by the coloniality of state practices and internalization of expert regimes that had for long been imposed on such countries of the Global South as Bolivia by the global development industry. One of the program directors at the Ministry of Development Planning expressed this in a somewhat similar way when he stated:

At the moment it can be seen that in those development plans that are being worked upon right now, such as sectoral development plans, we can explain the philosophical part [of the notion of *vivir bien*] very well. But when it comes to grounding these [philosophical ideas] in concrete and rational proposals that would still be within the framework of *vivir bien*, there emerges a rupture, a very clear rupture. Programs and projects are the same as before; they are conducted within the same traditions as always before. And, as we do not have indicators of *vivir bien* yet, indicators evidently continue to be the same; they are the traditional ones. So, you can imagine what kind of rupture exists between the paradigm of *vivir bien* and the reality [of bureaucratic practice]; the reality is different...

This commentary makes one wonder where to locate the rupture and abyss between

concepts and practices. Was it the lack of technical expertise? To some extent, it appeared that when the notion of *vivir bien* was brought into state policy discourses, it did not respond to public servants' need for an identifiable problem that they could solve with specific technical means and with the technical expertise that they have. Neoliberal colonialism was such a wide problem that in addition to technical tools, it would require major political changes that were outside the repertoire of public servants. Such issues as the lack of indicators were an obvious source of disorientation among consultants and public servants, but not as crucial as the lack of knowing – or agreement on – what kind of transformation was sought. It seemed that the logics of the notion of *vivir bien* as state policy served specific political purposes, while the bureaucratic practices discussed here showed coherence and consistency within logics that continued to encourage institutional continuity and stability. Standard intervention models seemed to be overruling the indigenous policy discourses that new and inexperienced political leaders were trying to promote. In some sense, they also gave structure to the translation of the ambiguous policy concept into practice. In the following, I will discuss the question of technical expertise in greater detail.

## 6.2 TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND (DE-) POLITICIZATION

Dezalay and Garth (2002) have vividly described the rule of 'gentlemen lawyers', that is, politicians and elites trained in legal expertise within Latin American state formation. Although this knowledge base and field of expertise that has ruled ever since the colonial times still operates, it can be argued that the neoliberal turn has brought to the fore a new group of influential professionals: economists.<sup>50</sup> Often US-trained in neoclassical economics and originating from national elites, these new experts, or technocrats (technical experts in pertinent administrative positions), have become influential figures in economic, financial, and social policy-making since the launching of the SAPs (Dezalay and Garth 2002: 176). They work either for national banks, ministries, and other state institutions, or IFIs and international development agencies. It has, in fact, been argued that the increasing role of technocrats and technical experts in state governance has led to serious democracy deficits (Harvey 2005). Decision-making shifted gradually from politically elected representatives, such as parliamentarians, to technical experts working in IFIs, development agencies, or foreign funded projects.<sup>51</sup> Within IFIs, there was a

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50 This is not to say that Latin American state formation has taken place solely on the basis of legal and economic expertise. During the Cold War, the US government financed the training of many Latin American scholars in such disciplines as sociology and anthropology (Dezalay and Garth 2002: 34–5).

51 This decreasing role of democratic forums such as parliaments in decision-making during SAPs and PRSPs in the Global South has been noted by several scholars such as Gould and Ojanen (2003), Molenaeers and Renard (2002), Seppänen (2003), and Steward and Wang (2003).

deeply seated suspicion towards politics, perceived simply as a “manifestation of self-interest and rent-seeking behavior which negatively distorts policy choices” (Boås and McNeill 2003: 70).

Consequently, many scholars have argued that rule of experts enhances processes of de-politicization (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Ferguson 1994; Mitchell 2002). What is meant by this is that experts tend to identify issues as problems when they can offer suitable solutions to them through their own technical expertise and skills. Political battles, power relations, and structural inequalities (in land ownership, employment, control over the means of production, etc.) are ruled as residing outside the toolbox of development experts (Ferguson 1994; Mitchell 2002). To an extent, Li’s ethnographic take on the question of expertise diverges from these scholars in the sense that she does not find “expertise closed, self-referencing and secure” (2007: 10). Instead of arguing that de-politicization is effectively achieved through expert rules, Li suggests that it can be also contested. Referring to Foucault’s distinction between the will to govern and ‘permanent provocation’, Li distinguishes between the practice of government (‘rendering technical’) and the practice of politics, “the conditions under which expert discourse is punctuated by a challenge it cannot contain; moments when the targets of expert schemes reveal, in word or deed, their own critical analysis of the problems that they confront” (2007: 11–2).

The Bolivian state transformation process is an example *par excellence* of a critical challenge to development expertise. The first page of the NDP makes a dramatic remark on the role of donor-funded consultants in the process of neoliberal downsizing of the state, claiming:

The withdrawal of the state has reduced the strength of the state and it has caused its functional dispersion. Employment in the public sector was dramatically reduced in favor of private consultants, financed by foreign donors. State bureaucracy was privatized and subordinated to foreign interests...

Indeed, the accelerated privatization of state industries and services but also of the state administration itself, as conditioned by the SAPs and PRSPs, led to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs (Kohl and Farthing 2006). This provided opportunities for private consultancy firms and individual consultants because private entrepreneurs with project management skills fitted into the changing ideological atmosphere and circumstances of the state administration: “The era of downsizing and layering [of the state]..., privatization and commercialization...[is] seen as giving consultants a special role as influencers and opinion formers” (Fincham 1999: 336). Due to the constant lack of funding to pay for all the public servant positions needed, and the commitment to diminish the size of state bureaucracy according to the IFI regulations, governments tended to fill posts with donor-funded consultants.

The notion of *vivir bien* negates the role of international experts and rather draws on local – indigenized – experiences of indigenous communities. Ultimately, this paradigm shift demonstrates that what Mosse (2011) calls ‘travelling rationalities’ – ideas of international development experts that are considered universally applicable and neutral constructions – are being seriously questioned. Likewise problematized is the idea that there is “an objectively knowable world which is understandable through the application of rational thought... [in which] universal categories are laid down within which the world can be neatly arranged” (Stirrat 2000: 36). Although the new development paradigm emphasizes indigenous alternatives to global development models, it also stresses development as a political rather than technical question.

This has evoked a crisis of technical expertise on two levels: on the one hand, there has emerged an increasing need for rendering indigenous ideas, knowledge, and worldviews technical; on the other, as political-economic issues have come to the fore, the whole notion of technical expertise is being questioned by many agents of change. With regards the latter, there is a contradiction with the way that *vivir bien* has been formulated into state policy, which requires the translation of knowledge (and political goals) into governmental practice. What I call ‘governmental practice’ is about identifying problems to be solved and rendering knowledge technical, which as Li has argued “is a response to the practice of politics that shapes, challenges, and provokes [governmental practice]” (2007: 12). In the following, I describe and analyze contestations and diverging views over technical expertise. They appear to be rooted in the emerging contradiction between the fact that Morales’ regime represents a group that has critically assessed and resisted the existence of [neoliberal] expert rule but which, as a governing regime, now faces the challenge of creating and implementing new kinds of practice of government and (indigenous) expert schemes. When shifting from politics as contention to policy as state practice, overt politicization should be tamed into something technical.

### **6.2.1 Critique of Technical Expertise by Technocrats Working in Aid Agencies**

Although, as stated in Chapter Five, the response of international development agencies to Bolivia’s new policy ideas were initially positive and supportive, my interviews and interaction with development experts working for aid agencies showed that their reactions to the practice of government were less flattering. The question of technical expertise, or the lack of it, was very important when they assessed the translation of the notion of *vivir bien* into bureaucratic practice. One Bolivian education expert working in a bilateral donor agency, for example, criticized the practice of government as “purely improvisational”. He was outraged because, in his opinion, the notion of *vivir bien* as it

was portrayed in the NDP was merely political rather than stemming from any baseline studies, technical reports, surveys, or other accumulated data. Additionally, he suggested that there is no technical capacity to implement programs and projects and that although donors have offered their expertise for the governing regime, ministers have tended to decline their offers. This, in his opinion, had to do with the governing regime's "messianic" enthusiasm to construct all policies and practices from scratch; the government has, he said, "a syndrome of starting everything anew as if the past did not exist". This tendency, or Arendt's (1990 [1963]) revolutionary condition for a new beginning, was also mentioned by other development experts, one of whom noted that the government wants to construct "a new world". For this reason, they suggested, Morales' regime refused to employ existing technical expertise: all those who had worked for, or had some identifiable or imaginary link with previous governments or development agencies, were bypassed as reminiscent of neoliberal colonialism.

This did not occur solely with economic expertise, but with indigenous expertise as well. Some donor agencies had for years worked with indigenous rights, intercultural bilingual education and other indigenous issues. They had developed methodologies and techniques for incorporating indigenous issues into development programming and the concrete implementation of programs and projects. Although these experts, many of them anthropologists, were thrilled with new state policy ideas, they noted that the governing regime was not interested in applying their methods and techniques. The German GTZ, for example, had, since the mid-1990s, supported the works of indigenous culturalists such as Javier Medina, discussed in Chapter Four. The indigenous experts of the GTZ expressed to me their deep interest and commitment to the promotion of the notion of *vivir bien* as a new *propuesta civilizatoria* (civilizational proposal) that would replace the idea of development as the focus of social change. They emphasized the importance of such principles as harmony and balance between community and nature in the generation of happiness and wellbeing. In their opinion, their program had the capacity and interest to support the governing regime in the translation of these principles into technical tools. However, the governing regime did not seem to be interested. In consequence, they criticized the governing regime for being unable to translate radical indigenous discourses into practice. They noted that, as a result, the practice of government continued to function through Western bureaucratic logics, executed by public servants whose mentalities revolved around technical expertise acquired in the age of neoliberal policies.

According to many development experts, another cause for the lack of implementation was the brain-drain from the state to the private sector and to international development agencies. In their opinion, this had to do with salary levels. Many noted that due to the considerable decrease in salary levels – obviously also for political and ideological reasons, although this was not often said aloud – there had been a major flight of human capital from the ministries to donor agencies, private consultancy firms, and to the private sector

in general (see also, Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 206). The question of salaries had to do with the fact that during the first months of his presidency, Evo Morales announced a Plan of Austerity (*Plan de Austeridad*) which drastically reduced the salary levels of all public figures starting from the president himself (República de Bolivia: Decreto Supremo No. 28609; República de Bolivia: Decreto Supremo No. 28618).<sup>52</sup> The aim of the plan (which was one of Morales' campaign promises) was to promote transparency of public spending and to redirect savings recovered from prior excessive salaries to social sectors. It was also supposed to tackle the massive imbalances in salary levels that had emerged during neoliberal governmentality between state-financed public servants and those consultants and technocrats working in ministries for the purposes of foreign-funded development programs and projects (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 206). According to many development experts at the international development agencies, no technically capable consultant would work under these financial conditions. On the other hand, one of Morales' vice-ministers commented that the brain-drain was a positive thing, because he doubted that professionals trained in neoliberal traditions would ever be able to convert their mindsets and expertise to respond to the needs of the new *vivir bien* paradigm.

One major concern for IFIs and development agencies was that Morales' regime devoted too much enthusiasm to politics and too little attention to the execution of financial, economic, and social policy. It was often suggested that the governing regime concentrated so much on political and ideological issues because they did not have the technical capacity to run the state (see also, Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 206). A bilateral development expert, a Bolivian economist, commented:

In my opinion technical expertise does exist. What has weakened is the executive capacity. When we [as donors] analyze the capacity of the government, we say that what is lacking is the technical expertise. But, what we mean is that technical expertise is lacking at the higher executive levels, because the state apparatus has actually been maintained as in the past in most ministries... There is expertise and the technicians are good, but the heads [of the ministries] are putting on the brakes.

This view showed clearly that the lack of expertise was identified as belonging to the new executive, who had initiated the state transformation process. When accrediting public servants with good performance, the Bolivian economist suggested that, in his opinion, continuation under past expertise would have been the most convenient order, yet this

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52 Another new challenge laid on the shoulders of political and technical figures employed by the government is the prohibition on working for a donor-funded project or international development agency for two years after resigning from a governmental post. In a country where most middle-class employment opportunities reside within either state bureaucracy or foreign funded projects, this is a major hurdle to further employment and income generation. These rules are regulated by the supreme decree concerning the norms for the deployment of foreign donor funds (República de Bolivia: Decreto Supremo No. 29308: Normas para la gestión y ejecución de recursos externos de donación).

had been disturbed by new political leaders. Another Bolivian expert from a bilateral donor agency, who had occupied major political positions during previous governments, continued along the same lines: “As many ministers have not even finished school, they would have needed very strong technicians.” As this was not the case, he said, “public sector management had become politicized”. As a result, another Bolivian economist working for a different bilateral development agency (most Bolivian experts in aid agencies, indeed, seemed to be economists) criticized the notion of *vivir bien* as *puro discurso político*. According to him, it was political discourse rather than a technically implementable development model. He called it an “artificial cliché of indigeneity” which, in his opinion, tried to substitute previous economic logics (*lógica economista*) with the logics of solidarity (*lógica de solidaridad*). This, he stated, was not a good idea. A third economist working for yet another agency who had earlier claimed that development agencies were very supportive of Morales’ regime and its policy ideas, later gave as his personal opinion that actually many regarded the NDP as “rhetorical, political, weakly elaborated, untenable, unviable and infeasible”. Additionally, he stated that such initiatives as the nationalization of natural resources had conflicted with the political views of many of those who had worked for previous governments.

This latter comment showed that politics also featured in the work of donor experts. While Morales’ regime was criticized for being too politicized, donor experts’ neoclassical economic expertise and universal idea(l)s of development were considered scientific and knowledge-based, rather than political and ideological choices. Yet many professionals currently working in technical positions for donor agencies had, in fact, been working as technocrats, consultants, or even as vice-ministers for previous governments that had pro-active roles in promoting market liberalization, privatizations, and the withdrawal of the state in economic and social affairs. During the SAPs and PRSPs, the underlying assumption was that “economic liberalization is necessary for development” (Boås and McNeill 2003: 64), yet this idea was “both ideologically biased and lacked genuine knowledge and understanding about the specific features and internal logic of the states” (ibid.). Technical expertise at the time of neoliberal restructurings emerged from “the paradox of intense state interventions and government by elites and ‘experts’ in a world where the state is supposed not to be interventionist” (Harvey 2005: 69). Indeed, one of my informants from a bilateral donor agency who had previously worked for the World Bank noted that the role of experts had never been “purely technical... Even the technocrats were appointed for political reasons.” Therefore, their technical inputs had been framed by specific kinds of political and ideological stances that were very different from those prevailing in contemporary Bolivian policy discourses. In consequence, many Bolivian development experts working for development agencies today did not share the official enthusiasm of international aid agencies for Morales’ regime. Political and ideological stances were so different.



It can be argued that the penetration by social movements of the state, with tactics of contentious politics and an alternative political project that defied all prior knowledge and expertise, led to a dual crisis. The first was that of the legitimacy of IFIs and international development agencies *vis-à-vis* the Bolivian state that was opting for the retrieval of decision and policy-making processes from global actors to the national (and local) level. The policy shift from universal development models to local solutions based on indigenous ideas challenged the knowledge base and technical expertise that sustained the former. Yet the question of technical expertise is important for donors because this is how donor agencies work. They identify development problems based on their own policy priorities and support local governments or civil society groups in solving them (Mosse 2004, 2005). Identifying problems, and deploying funds to solve them, are of major importance in the legitimization of their role *vis-à-vis* their partner countries and their own tax-payers (ibid.).

The second was the crisis of well-educated and globally networked Bolivian development experts, many of whom no longer found a work niche within ministries or other state institutions. This had led to their being transferred from state institutions to international development agencies and they needed to legitimize their new positions. For these two reasons, the question of technical expertise, and its politicization, came strongly to the fore. Rose (1996) has defined expertise as “authority arising out of a claim to knowledge, to neutrality and to efficacy”. This claim to authority was being jeopardized both with regards international development agencies with their universal development ideas, and in the case of Bolivian development experts, who were labeled as neoliberal colonialists. Often originating from and forming part of the Bolivian (development) elites, the latter experienced a change in their status. The rise of new political leaders from social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions had brought to the fore of the state people whose paths had not crossed socially with those of traditional elites and development experts previously in charge of the state. Now the newcomers were the rulers.

In the following sections, I discuss the kind of local expertise that has been employed in this process and the kinds of challenges it faces.

### **6.2.2 Technicalizing Indigenous Expertise**

Prior to Christmas 2008, the Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination organized an internal meeting with its staff to discuss the content and meanings of the notion of *vivir bien*. The invited guest of the meeting in which I participated was Simon Yampara, whose ideas I presented in Chapter Four. The meeting was part of a series of discussions with indigenous intellectuals, anthropologists, and academicians such as Javier Medina and

Xavier Albó, who were expected to share their intellectual ideas related to the notion of *vivir bien* with the staff of the vice-ministry. The aim was to help program managers, consultants, and public servants to understand the new policy concept better and to give them practical tools to proceed with concrete programming. In a sense, these intellectuals functioned as brokers of knowledge between state bureaucrats and indigenous communities (Lewis and Mosse 2006). Instead of consulting Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní, Chiquitano, Mojeño, and other indigenous leaders and members of communities about what good life means for them, the bureaucrats of the vice-ministry opted for expert translation of indigeneity.

Nearly thirty people were packed into a small, glass-walled conference room off an open space office, but all quieted down when Yampara entered. The meeting was opened by a program manager in charge of development planning. He explained to the crowd of young, urban, middle-class consultants and public servants present that the Ministry of Development Planning wanted to collaborate with Bolivian intellectuals who have examined the notion of *vivir bien*, in order to learn from their indigenous expertise. He told us that his personal interest was to learn how to set up technical tools, such as measurable indicators, for this new indigenous policy idea. In an apologetic manner, he explained to Yampara that Western culture; of which bureaucratic practice, in his opinion, was part, is constructed upon the idea of change that has to be measured through technical means. Therefore, he said, for them as public servants, it is not enough to hear about worldviews and indigenous traditions on a general level; they had to be given concrete tools in order to work with them in practice. This was clearly a wish and a request directed at Yampara. The program manager also said that he would like to know how it would be possible in the future to compare Bolivia statistically with other countries, if the new policy concept were so different from universally comparable policy ideas (such as those related to economic growth or poverty reduction) used by earlier regimes.

As a fierce promoter of Aymara traditions and self-governance through *ayullus*, Yampara ignored the program manager's requests and rather concentrated on explaining his understanding of the notion of *suma qamaña*. Before he started, Yampara gazed at the audience and stated sarcastically that it seemed that the people who had invited him were not taking the meeting seriously. "If this was a meeting to be taken seriously," he said, "coca leaves would be distributed to each participant. We would share coca-leaves with each other as a sign of reciprocity and we would chew coca together as a sign of respect towards our ancestors and ancient Andean civilizations. Only after that we would talk." Young consultants and public servants smiled briefly and glanced at each other bemused. They were clearly impressed by Yampara's straightforward, and slightly aggressive, insight. After a pause, Yampara started to lecture those present. He pointed out, critically, that the staff of the ministry was working with the concept of *vivir bien* in a very "light" and superficial way. In his opinion, public servants were using the term in policy documents

and programming without any content: “The notion of *vivir bien* is just words on paper.” Additionally, the NDP, in his opinion, still reflected the “monocultural logics” of Western bureaucracies, though it should rather be based on the logics of plural Andean worldviews. After this harsh criticism, Yampara explained that, for him, the notion of *vivir bien* paralleled Andean cosmological convivence (*cosmo-convivencia andina*), with the notion of *suma qamaña* being the Andean paradigm of life. In respect to technical inputs, Yampara refused to answer. He criticized the idea of formulating measurable indicators about the notion of good life by saying that it is not possible to quantify everything. “*Suma qamaña* is life,” he said, and added that “it cannot be quantified”. In other words, Yampara was not willing to use his indigenous expertise in the translation of indigenous ideas into technical solutions.

After the meeting, I discussed with three young consultants in their office space about their views of the meeting. One of them, with a background in radical left-wing student movements, suggested that, in his opinion, many indigenous scholars, Yampara included, provide overly idealistic images of indigenous communities. He regretted that their research is seldom based on empirical analysis of the everyday lives of indigenous communities; in a politically motivated way, indigenous communities are too often represented as havens of harmony and reciprocity that have no internal hierarchies or conflicts. Another consultant, originating from a highland Aymara community, defended Yampara. He said that he could recognize the principles and ideas of *suma qamaña* that Yampara presented as part of everyday lives in Aymara rural areas. He himself, for example, had worked for a year as a community leader providing his time and resources to the decision-making of the community as was demanded by community rules concerning rotational leadership. By doing that, he had complied with his share of community obligations and could continue with his university studies at the capital.

The third consultant, a university-educated woman from an Aymara background, commented that she had great sympathies for indigenous intellectuals, such as Yampara, because their ideas, in her opinion, were responses to centuries of dominance by “Western universalist views of knowledge”. In her opinion, it did not matter whether Yampara’s ideas were solely ideals. What was important, she said, was that he was showing that indigenous communities have positive features, such as reciprocity and harmony, principles that each of us should, she said, cherish. The consultant with the left-wing background noted that they were referring here solely to Aymara perceptions and experiences. He said that lowlands indigenous organizations, among others, had already accused the Ministry of Development Planning of being too Aymara-centric, and the visions of *suma qamaña* that Yampara presented did not help to solve these tensions. He said that, as technical advisors and consultants, they were “screwed” because they should incorporate indigenous worldviews and ideas of good life from more than thirty indigenous groups into viable planning mechanisms and they had no idea how to do it. Yampara’s presentation had not

given them technical tools to solve these critical questions. Yet these young consultants at the Ministry of Development Planning were in charge of generating guidelines for the implementation of the notion of *vivir bien* throughout state institutions.

An important issue in the use of indigenous expertise was the role given to indigenous communities themselves. In the second sectoral workshop, two stakeholders from the education sector pulled me aside and wanted to have a walk with me outside. They wanted to share with me their worry about the lack of grassroots representatives in the sectoral plan workshops. This was an issue that had also caught my attention. When they had confronted Aguirre with the question of indigenous participation, Aguirre's response, later repeated to me in an interview, was that the elaboration of sectoral plans was "a purely technical task". Therefore, it was the task of public servants and technical consultants, he said, and added that "social movements and indigenous organizations were to be included in the planning processes later on, when technical issues had been solved". This remark caused confusion and disbelief among the education experts who came to talk to me. They were outraged that development planning, in their opinion, still appeared to be solely a matter of technical exercise rather than a manifestation of new decolonized state practices. The inclusion of social movements and indigenous organizations later on, when priorities were already set up, appeared to them an example *par excellence* of the use of civil society participation as an instrument legitimizing top-down technical approaches: an issue all too familiar in Bolivian policy making (Booth and Piron 2004; Molenaers and Renard 2002; Morrison and Singer 2007). And yet, even during neoliberal governments, they commented, there had been a tradition of inviting indigenous experts to planning events. Curiously, the governing regime promoting indigenous ideas as state policy seemed to be neglecting the participation of social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions in state technical affairs. There did not seem to exist systematic ways of incorporating indigenous views from the grassroots.

### **6.2.3 Young Consultants as Brokers of Policy Knowledge**

Let us move back to the first sectoral workshop in Chasquipampa. After workshop presentations by Aguirre and other key note speakers, the workshop participants were divided into groups according to their corresponding sectors. The task of each group was to begin deliberating on visions and objectives for each sector. Each group was assisted by a young consultant who had been recruited to the Vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination on a short-term basis for the detailing of sectoral development plans. A few young professionals who worked at the Ministry of Finance also served in similar roles. I speak here of 'young consultants' because most of them were recent university graduates and relatively young both in age and in professional career. In this sense, they marked a

clear departure from the practice of previous governments when there was an abundance of donor-paid, high-end, senior professional consultants working in the ministries and for development agencies. A visit to any Bolivian ministry indicated that there was now an abundance of new young people working on the staff. A young woman, head of a planning unit in one of the most influential ministries, commented upon the influx of young directors and consultants as follows:

There are a lot of young people in the ministries. They represent new blood; they are very enthusiastic. They enter [the ministries] with all those illusions of radical change, all those illusions characteristic of young people. They want to rule the world; they want to change things. That is why the minister has so much confidence in young people, and that is why young people are recruited.

During a break from group activities at the first sectoral plan workshop, I took a walk in the nearby surroundings with a young female consultant from the Ministry of Development Planning. She was equally enthusiastic about the role of young people in the administration and she seemed to believe that, although there have always been job opportunities for recent university graduates in Bolivian ministries, many more young people had been recruited during the contemporary governing regime. With the recruitment of young people, she concluded, the new regime aims to create a new, and more socially conscious, generation of public servants committed to the transformation of the state through such issues as social benefits, redistribution of wealth, and the increasing role of the state in economic and social affairs. Yet, despite these common characteristics, there was a notable diversity among these young consultants.

Húascar, a 29-year old economics graduate from the UMSA, represented indigenous culturalist ideas. He was a native from the rural Aymara region of Omasuyos, a politically radical area in the Andean mountains North of La Paz, from where he had migrated to the capital in order to study. Some of Húascar's previous professors, such as Carlos Villegas, were now working as ministers of the state. Although Húascar successfully combined university studies, bureaucratic work, and community duties (including a year of obligatory rotational community work typical of the highlands Aymara), he noted that, in his opinion, there are two quite distinct and hard to combine "worlds" within Bolivia. His region of origin hosts many radical Aymara movements, including a semi-military indigenous group *Ponchos Rojos* (see Poma et al. 2008). In political terms these radical *indigenistas* considered Evo Morales' regime to be a transitional period before the return to *Kollasuyo* could truly begin. The Aymara leader Felipe Quispe (*El Mallku*) who challenged Evo Morales in the presidential elections of 2002 originated from those areas as well. Húascar considered him the true representative of Andean indigenous peoples, while he identified Evo Morales as the leader of peasant unions (for similar discussions, see Albrow 2006: 416–7; Morales 2012: 68; also Poma et al. 2008). Although he believed

in indigenous cultural values and fulfilled his commitments towards his community of origin, his opinion was that to combine Andean cosmological beliefs with state bureaucracy was almost impossible because state bureaucracy and its norms had, in his opinion, been brought to Bolivia from abroad. Yet he also criticized the tendencies of the ministries to treat indigenous peoples as a homogeneous group as if social stratification or hierarchies did not exist among them.

Vaclav, a 30-year old graduate from the department of political science at the UMSA, represented left-wing tendencies among these young consultants. His teachers (Luis Tapia among them) had mainly consisted of radical left-wing intellectuals. Having been born and raised in the lowlands and educated in the highlands, he was strongly aware of the political tensions and factions in the country. On the one hand, he felt a constant longing for his origins yet, on the other, he sensed that his lowlands friends and family felt he had betrayed his origins because, despite oppositional resistance to Morales' regime in the lowlands, he had decided to work for it. Claudia, who worked in another ministry, had had similar experiences. She had felt the tensions of joining Morales' administration. In Santa Cruz, her friends and acquaintances had called her a betrayer of her region and a traitor to her social class. Claudia told me what had inspired her to make this choice:

Bolivia will never be the same as before Evo Morales. Indigenous peoples will never again let anyone treat them the way they have been treated. You can no longer tell them: "Return to your community and take care of your *llamas*; that is your place". No! They now know their rights. They know they can go far and achieve a lot; they now know that they are entitled to equality with others.

Alongside indigenous culturalists such as Húascar, and left-wing oriented consultants such as Vaclav and Claudia, there were also more technically-oriented young consultants. Flavio, a 32-year old political scientist from the capital city, with degrees from European universities, was technically skilled in project and program management and the use of technical tools and frameworks. Despite his relatively young age, Flavio had had many years of experience in public sector management with previous governments and with donor-coordinated public sector projects. Therefore, his discourses on *vivir bien* paralleled those of many development donors. Flavio understood good life as an increasing participation amongst the poor, and as a solution to the problems of poverty and income inequality. Participation was clearly a key theme for him. In his opinion, the process of decolonization of the state aimed to decentralize its political and administrative powers, thereby supplying municipalities, departments, regions, and indigenous communities with greater autonomy; this would increase the participation of the poor in decision-making processes. Although many detested the notion of good life as development, Flavio had no problem in defining it as a new model for achieving development. In fact, he had a hard time understanding the indigenous critique of development. He told me

about the internal battles over meanings and techniques of *vivir bien* at the Ministry of Development Planning in the following way:

The concept of *vivir bien* is very interesting, but it is not well understood yet. We don't even understand it at the Ministry of [Development] Planning. I think that our group of consultants who are working on this thematic have new, interesting ideas. Our views are not the typical views of public servants but still it has cost us a lot to understand [the concept]. Sometimes we have had arguments with Noel [Aguirre] or other people because we did not understand the concept or because we did not agree upon it. At the moment it is not clear how to translate the concept of *vivir bien* into public institutions. To change the mentality [of people in state institutions] is complicated. It gets even more complicated because it is not clear what one wants to obtain with this concept. This same has happened in our office [that is, the Ministry of Development Planning] and, it makes the implementation of sectoral plans, for example, very difficult.

Flavio's remark on how complicated it is to change the mentality of people in state institutions underlines the difficulties of transforming historically constructed forms of political reason. Although an alternative governmental scheme of social change is being promoted, difficulties lie in the translation of concepts and theories into practice. The process of state transformation through decolonization and indigenous ideas of good life can become governmental – that is, internalized political reason – only if it is successfully translated into technical practice of government (Li 2007). As the desired political change (or the problem that needs to be corrected) was not defined in a coherent way, the personal views of various consultants reflected diverging interests: indigenous, left-wing, and technocratic. Because of the ambiguity of the concept, each young consultant seemed to rationalize it through their own mindsets. In respect to this, Mosse has remarked that “consultants make policy successful by building ambiguity and interpretative flexibility into project designs, thereby opening them up to diverse interests” (2005: 46). Yet the role of the young consultants who spoke to me was very different to that of aforementioned neoliberal consultants. They could hardly be labeled “a group that has gained an insidious power, unaccountable and unseen” (Fincham 1999: 336).

Although young consultants at the Ministry of Development Planning implied that they had been recruited because they have a revolutionary spirit and they represent the new generation and new thinking, development donors tended to explain the recruitment of young and inexperienced consultants on the basis of political reasons and low salary levels rather than technical skills. They further argued that Morales' regime was unwilling to recruit anyone who had worked for previous governments or other neoliberal agents, despite the fact that this has led to a deterioration of technical capacity and development expertise. To some extent, this delegitimized the new young consultants in the eyes of development donors. Nevertheless, Claudia defended their roles forcefully:

In this process, it is not all about technical expertise. In this process of change there is no utility in having all the knowledge in the world and all the possible degrees and PhDs, if one does not have social consciousness... There are people who have graduated from Harvard, who have master's degrees and doctoral degrees. Yet all they did during previous governments was steal... Degrees do not guarantee successful public sector management or a commitment to work for the benefit of the country.

Claudia's comment reflected the idea that political commitment to a socially inclusive state transformation process is a more important criterion for working with the current governing regime than specific technical expertise. Additionally, she implied that experts originating from national elites in the past had used the state for personal political and economic gain rather than to benefit a common purpose. In this sense, the recruitment of new kinds of young consultants from outside the traditional elites symbolized a new beginning. Furthermore, the role of foreign donors in defining and determining policy content (and the nature of consultants) in the Bolivian public administration had been diminished along the lines of decolonization of the state (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 206). Policy events and workshops during previous governments had been populated by representatives from IFIs and international development agencies, but they were now almost entirely absent, replaced by the young newcomers. Surely this was a sign of resistance to the abroad and the above: a sign of Bolivians deciding – for better or worse – on their own parameters of development. In some sense therefore these new young consultants also symbolized ideals of increasing sovereignty. Young consultants were a *tabula rasa* on which new meanings of governing were to be inscribed.

### 6.3 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has concentrated on the practice of government, which has been defined as the translation of “all those ways of reflecting and acting that have aimed to shape, guide, manage or regulate the conduct of persons...in the light of certain principles or goals” (Rose 1996: 41–2) into concrete governmental programs and projects. As my ethnographic examples from sectoral plan workshops indicated, attempts are being made to formulate a simple, concrete and unambiguous vision, focus areas, and objectives, as well as monitoring and evaluation systems, for different policy sectors according to the logics of the notion of indigenous good life. This has been a difficult process as the concept of *vivir bien* itself is very ambiguous. Rendering indigenous ideas technical makes them more accessible to public servants and consultants who are often less familiar with indigenous discourses than are representatives of social movements, indigenous activists, academic scholars, and political leaders. In a sense, the application of standardized technical tools for planning eases the unification of various perceptions under common



technical frameworks. Yet, it also allows fragmentation because, as was explained in this chapter, the content of planned state transformation through indigenous ideas is not clearly defined which makes the concept open to a variety of interpretations depending on specific, and diverging, interests.

Difficulties in problematization and in rendering technical have led to a situation in which the notion of good life has not effectively become a new kind of radical decolonizing and decentralizing governmental practice. Although Bolivia's process of state transformation through indigenous ideas has been a result of the practice of politics – a critical challenge to neoliberal expert regimes – the formulation of a new style of practice of government has been difficult. The inability to translate indigenous ideas into state practice; the unwillingness to utilize the existing technical expertise and the consequent recruitment of new, inexperienced youth; and the stubborn will to start everything anew have all contributed to low levels of execution of concrete programmes and projects, an issue of which political leaders, such as Aguirre, were aware. This observation corresponds with the assessments of Molero and Paz (2012) and Webber (2011) discussed in the previous chapter. The ethnographic examination of how this has occurred shows the kinds of tensions and contradictions amidst what state actors find themselves at. In the course of the events, there is a danger that new indigenous discourses legitimize existing bureaucratic traditions and practices: the colonality of the state constantly reproduces itself in the continuation of governmental practice.

Although the institutionalization of the new revolutionary beginning through indigenous ideas would require the construction of new democratic arenas for the participation and deliberation of social movements and indigenous organizations, indigenous discourses are rather compressed into the mode of pre-existing technical tools and frameworks. Absent from bureaucratic events and workshops that I described and analyzed in this chapter were discourses about indigenous peoples' own modes of governance, such as indigenous self-governance through autonomy, control of lands and territories, and even their physical participation. Thus, both global actors, such as IFIs and development agencies, and local actors, such as social movements and indigenous organizations, were absent from forums aiming to translate policy into practice; all that was left were state actors: political leaders and public servants.

In the following chapter, I move onto discussing the nature of the state bureaucracy in more detail. If the development of bureaucratic practice and technical expertise on the basis of indigeneity was challenging, a danger that more positive forms of power were being bypassed by other forms of rule was also emerging. In the following, I will shed more light on this question.

## 7 BUREAUCRACY AS A DISCIPLINARY POWER

This chapter looks at the articulations between government and discipline in a state bureaucracy which is under process of change. It examines how bureaucracy as a disciplinary power and locus of power relations functions when it is challenged by discourses of decolonization. Although continuing the analysis of governmental practices started in the previous chapter, this chapter extends the analysis towards institutional and structural characteristics of the Bolivian nation-state. These characteristics reflect histories of the coloniality of the state in Bolivia and at the Latin American regional level. Through their identification, this chapter aims to find more explanatory power for the continuation of the practice of government identified in the Chapter Six.

First, I examine the views and actions of public servants. Through their actions, they are producers and maintainers of bureaucratic power. My special interest resides in explaining resistance among public servants towards indigenous policy ideas. Secondly, I examine the political nature of state institutions, corporatism between the ruling regime and social movements, and the centralization of the state: all characteristics that are useful in explaining my ethnographic findings. The advantage of ethnographic scrutiny in this kind of endeavor is that it makes it possible to combine personal experiences and concrete practices of diverse state actors with more institutional and structural aspects. Via the ethnographic gaze, I examine how institutional and structural elements of the state are acted upon, negotiated, and transformed in a politically volatile situation. I focus on the indications of bureaucratic and authoritarian forms of rule that are in stark contrast with discourses of decolonization and democratization.

I argue that the MAS' transformational agenda faces severe challenges as the new indigenous policy formations collide with the existing bureaucratic-institutional structures of the Bolivian nation-state. In many ways, these challenges are reflected in dual tendencies within the state: in new discursive and ideological commitments to decolonize the state through the notion of *vivir bien* and in bureaucratic propensities to centralize its instruments of power and authority. While intending to liberate them as governing pluralities, a concept introduced in Chapters Four and Five, the clash of indigenous ideas and discourses with structures and institutions of the Bolivian state bureaucracy with its colonial and neoliberal roots seems to convert indigenous peoples into 'disciplined masses' – a term whose content and meanings will be elaborated and explained during this and the following chapter.

## 7.1 THE RESISTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

Since the mid-1980s shift from military regimes to representative democracy and from state-centered development planning to global free market options, there have been intense efforts to technicalize and de-politicize the Bolivian state bureaucracy through neoliberal expert regimes. The increasing rule of technical experts and elites in the running of the state, as well as the superseding of the role of the state by global and local actors, were integral parts of neoliberal theory in which the state was seen as corrupt, interventionist, and too politicized (Harvey 2005: 66, 69). In Bolivia, a process of de-bureaucratization, “a drastic reduction in the number of civil servants and a simplification of the administrative procedures” (Urioste 2009: 112), was initiated. Established in 1990, the professional conduct of Bolivian public servants is regulated by the Law of Governmental Administration and Control (*Ley de Administración y Control Gubernamentales* – SAFCO) (Mosqueira y Azul del Villar 2006). The aim of the law was to instill in public servants a ‘behavioral revolution’ based on ethics and professionalism in order to fight corrupt practices and political favoritism, widespread within the Bolivian state since its foundation (Urioste 2009: 108–9, 111). According to the law, public servants have to obey such principles as efficiency, transparency, and legality, and to obey the commands of their immediate superiors and other authorities (República de Bolivia 1990: 54).

The process of reforming the Bolivian state bureaucracy was heavily supported by IFIs and international development agencies (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 86). The idea that overtly political states in the Global South need to be tamed is manifested, for example, in the SAPs that shifted the emphasis of economic and social policy from states to global and local actors; and from states to markets and civil society (Boås and McNeill 2003). Urioste has described logics behind this thinking in the following way: “Privatisation came down to transferring the previous management of resources by the discredited and dishonest state to a new space in which there was neither a misappropriation of funds nor the poor administration of national resources by public interest groups, because they were not subject to political forces” (2009: 112). After the SAPs, however, it was estimated that market reforms function best in a well institutionalized rather than totally abolished state, which brought institutional reforms and agendas of good governance to the fore as recipes for taming the political nature of states in the Global South (Boås and McNeill 2003). Although there was a “recognition that ‘rolling back the state’ is in itself not enough to stimulate economic growth”, an ideal of a minimal state still prevailed; however, it should be efficient enough to enhance economic reforms through such measures as public sector management, modernization of public administration, and privatization of state-owned enterprises (ibid.: 69–70).

When the new executive originating from the political instrument of social movements

rose to power, public servants at state institutions were faced with a situation in which they were being led by political leaders originating from groups that had previously been almost completely marginalized from state administration. Additionally, these political leaders – and policy documents prepared by them – forthrightly promulgated the political nature of policy and condemned the state as colonial. In the following, I examine the responses of public servants to this shift.

### **7.1.1 Public Service as a Middle Class Livelihood**

At sectoral planning workshops in Chasquipampa, I participated in several sectoral groups, such as education, macroeconomics, decentralization, and foreign policy. Most public servants also taking part appeared (at least in my presence) to be enthusiastic defenders of the notion of *vivir bien* as new state policy. After the workshop, I started to call and make appointments with them in order to learn more about their experiences in translating policy ideas into bureaucratic practice. One case in particular led me to question whether the response of public servants to indigenous ideas was, in fact, as positive as it appeared. I had been trying to make a contact with a particular public servant whose ideas of sectoral plans had caught my attention at the workshop. After various refusals made over the phone by her secretary, I finally managed to get the person to talk to me. Before I was able to introduce my research interests and motivations, she started a long and apologetic monologue in which she explained why her sector had not yet been able to send the plan to the Ministry of Development Planning. Then she hung up the phone. The following weekend, while at the children's playground in a park with my son, I saw her there with her children as well. Delighted, I approached her from the distance. When she saw me, however, she quickly hid herself and left. The phone call had confused me, but I was now seriously puzzled.

I decided to call and to meet with another public servant who had acted as a very enthusiastic defender of the notion of *vivir bien* at the workshop. While Aguirre was present, he stood up various times to congratulate him on the new policy ideas. In another workshop, he portrayed himself as notably articulate person who had great expectations about the translation of the notion of *vivir bien* into practice. During sectoral groupwork, he lavishly praised the Ministry of Development Planning to me. This time we met at a cafeteria without the presence of political authorities, his work colleagues or other public servants. Mentioning my strange encounters with his colleague, I explained my research to him and stated that I was in no way related to any Bolivian political authorities or institutions. It became apparent that some of the public servants had been suspicious about my role at the sectoral workshops and were wondering whether I was there to assess and control the elaboration of sectoral plans or to report what had been going on to the

political authorities.

Although terrified at being considered a sort of a spy, this incident was one of the breakthrough points for my research. First of all, it completely changed my relationships with public servants. Rather than constantly hearing overtly positive accounts of indigenous policy, I started to learn what they really thought about policy change. Secondly, the incident showed that there was a mutual distrust between political leaders and public servants and that the state bureaucracy was infused with resulting power relations that inhibited public servants from expressing their opinions freely. Our meeting at the cafeteria turned into a very outspoken burst of complaints about policy. Now, alone with me, the public servant stated that he could not care less about any indigenous policy change. At his institution, he stated, public servants do not know about the notion of *vivir bien* and they don't care about it. "Daily routines at the office are the same as always", he said; he further explained their strategy according to which "the concept is just put into the documents but it is not practiced". He called this strategy "make-up" that hid the fact that there was "zero, or very little, implementation".

I asked him why public servants at his institution felt the need to bypass new policy ideas and to continue with existing bureaucratic traditions. He stated that personally his main interest was to retain his employment which is why he acted at official meetings as if he complied with governmental discourses of indigeneity. He further commented:

The motivation [for public servants to work for the government of Evo Morales] is not the job itself. It is just the means of living. It is not the office where you work, whether it is private or public. It is the job that provides you food, you know, and it provides you shelter. That's what motivates me to work there. I have, you know, material needs. I did not have a choice... That is what happens very often in Bolivia... You grab whatever is available; that's it.

Employment in the public sector has, indeed, been considered desirable by many Bolivians. Working for the state has provided stability of jobs, the potential for social benefits, and clearly defined work contracts, working hours, and so forth (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 271). Although conditionalities of the SAPs reduced the number of state employees drastically, especially in the mines and other industries, between 1996 and 2005 the number of public servants constantly increased in the higher professional and technical positions (ibid.: 271). The number of directors and technical experts in state institutions has markedly surpassed the number of state-provided working-class jobs (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 262). Indeed, the Bolivian state is an important provider of employment for the urban middle classes. Therefore, for many of the interviewed public servants, the main motivation to work at the public administration was not primarily ideological, nor based on a motivation to contribute to the process of transformation of the state, but to maintain their institutional status and employment.

During the nationalist revolution, state institutions and industries became the main source of jobs as the state expanded as an economic and political actor. Typical for the Latin American region (Foweraker et al. 2003; Vanden and Prevost 2012), political positions and technical jobs were often assigned on the basis of political favoritism which enabled “corrupt practices such as the accumulation of salaries, under-the-counter payments, bribes and unwarranted authorizations” (Urioste 2009: 108–9). This complex set of “political negotiation with a highly dispersed network of state patronage”, as Gray Molina has suggested, was “channeled through networks of party sympathizers and militants” (2003: 350). Despite neoliberal reforms of the public service, it has been argued that the so-called pacted democracy between major political parties reproduced the clientelistic political system by rewarding patronage positions in exchange for acquiescence with neoliberal policy decisions (Gamarra 1994). The integration of major political parties into a complex system of patronage that favored its members effectively silenced any kind of parliamentary resistance (*ibid.*). Additionally, it has been claimed that foreign aid funds operated as sources of income and employment for the middle classes, who were able to harness their technical skills and expert discourses into the maintenance of patron-client-relations and exchange of favors (Rodríguez-Carmona 2008: 224). However, Grindle has noted that “by the late 1990s, the capacity to form patronage-based pacts had diminished through state entrenchment and decentralization” (2003: 338). As neoliberal policies reduced state resources, the capacity of the state to recruit, to create positions, and to launch programs and projects through which webs of patronage were established and maintained was damaged (*ibid.*).

An interesting question for the future then is to examine whether this historically deeply rooted system of patronage has re-emerged with the strengthening of the resources of the state during the Morales’ regime. Although Morales’ government has had a strong anti-corruption stance, there have also been cases such as that in 2007 when a few MAS officials were caught selling jobs for political support (Van Cott 2008: 56). In the course of my fieldwork, I was made aware how widespread this phenomenon was. One evening, while walking down the Prado with Aguirre, he was stopped not once but twice by someone asking him for a job at the ministry on the basis of having supported the MAS politically or known Aguirre personally over the years. Embarrassed by my presence, Aguirre told me that this occurs to him constantly wherever he goes: “That’s a tradition of the country that we want to change”. In respect to this, Javier Medina, a former technocrat himself, noted that “Bolivia is an apparently Western kind of a state, but deep down it is just a huge provider of jobs”.

### **7.2.1 “Los Funcionarios Tienen Carnets de Todos los Partidos Políticos”: The Neutrality of Public Servants in Question**

In stark contrast with Weber’s description of the features of modern bureaucracy in which “normally the position of the official is held for life” (2006: 52), it has been common in Latin America that “each time regimes exchanged power, they changed completely the identity of...those managing the state” (Dezalay and Garth 2002: 38). At the beginning of his presidency, it seemed that Evo Morales tried to avoid this by arguing strongly for the sustainability of public service in order to maintain institutional memory and the technical capacity of state institutions. Many argued that this had to do with the recognition that the sudden political rise of the MAS had not given them time to prepare for technical posts and for bringing in new technical capacities. Many public servants seemed to be proud of the stability of labor conditions which seemed only to have increased. One of the program leaders at the Ministry of Health, for example, stated to me that:

There have been only minor changes in the state apparatus and labor stability has been guaranteed. What stands out with this government is that only approximately 20 percent of public servants have been changed, while during the previous governments more than 50 percent of them were changed when the new regime entered.

One vice-minister at the ministry of one of the strategic economic sectors was, however, a bit more skeptical about the labor stability and about the reasons behind it. As he noted:

We have sacked only a few people but many new ones have arrived. This is normal in all ministries; no-one is safe. Some ministries sack more people, others fewer. Unfortunately, ministries don’t have any kind of labor stability. That is why, in Bolivia, public servants have membership in all the political parties (*carnets de todos los partidos políticos*)... On the one hand, that is the tradition of the nation, and on the other, it is the economic situation that makes them do that.

What emerged as an important theme in respect to public servants in most interviews, as was exemplified with the earlier quotation, was the relationship between the technical neutrality and political stance of the public servant. While public servants themselves tended to underline their neutrality and technical expertise, others, such as indigenous activists and young consultants, were often very critical about the perceived linkage between public service and belonging to a political party. Some of them seemed bitter that they had not been recruited by the MAS, while others were more critical about the whole idea of public service being related to political support for the leading party of the executive. One indigenous activist who had worked as a technocrat for previous governments, for example, complained that he had been overlooked in recruitment

policies for political reasons. He thought that as he had worked for “neoliberals” and did not belong to the MAS, the government did not want to recruit him although he could help with the implementation of the notion of *vivir bien*.

The most important thing is the access to jobs and in order to have access to jobs, you have to belong to a political party, in this case, the MAS. If you are not a militant member of the MAS, you won't have access to public sector employment. They are not looking for people who know what they are doing because it would mean that the ones there who are less qualified but belong to the MAS, would lose their jobs.

He continued by analyzing technocrats, and the public sector in general:

There have been interesting [experiences] of technocratic management, but they were never capitalized, because these technocrats don't belong to any political parties. Therefore, they are always accepted as something necessary, but if you can avoid them, you will, because [technocrats] don't obey the rules of the party, and in Bolivia, that is serious. Therefore, the public sector is just mediocre in Bolivia. If you have obtained a job in state bureaucracy for political reasons, it is not because you are knowledgeable. This is how it has been now, before and always. It is not something typical to the MAS.

Flavio, one of the young consultants mentioned in Chapter Six, noted that he “has been lucky in not having had pressures to affiliate politically in order to get a job”. Nevertheless, although recruited by Morales' regime, he noted:

[T]hat this government is continuing with the same political practices, such as nepotism and the use of party networks in assigning jobs, of previous governments. It seems that for this government, it is very important that you belong to the MAS if you want to be recruited to the state bureaucracy. Of course, the same happened before too, but it seems that the government is no longer interested in combating this phenomenon. It rather seems to serve them in the process of state transformation to recruit people who are loyal to the party although they might not have any technical capacity to implement their views of change.

These quotations described aptly the continuation of the deeply rooted phenomenon of political clientelism, defined by Chalmers as “a pattern of relationships in which goods and services are exchanged between people of unequal status” (1977: 33). Clientelism has been widely studied both in Bolivia (Albro 2007; Domingo 2005; Lazar 2004; Urioste 2009) and elsewhere in Latin America (Auyero 2000; Burgwal 1995; Roniger and Gunes-Ayata 1994). Lazar has suggested that party-related public sector jobs in Bolivia that are very important in terms of income generation and employment, cannot be considered solely as gifts from the regime in power to its voters or as a sign of corruption; “rather they are part of citizen's expectations” (2004: 232). Indeed, during my fieldwork, it became clear that there was increasing pressure on the part of social movements to reward them



for their political support of the MAS by employing their leaders in state administration. One of the leaders of the CSCB, for example, lamented that peasant unions did not yet have the capacity to provide the state with technically skilled professionals but, instead, he felt that their leaders should occupy leading political posts. And indeed, if the state was to be decolonized, was this not a justified expectation?

However, the contrary seemed to be happening. As the MAS was unable to provide sufficient qualified candidates to perform bureaucratic tasks, many ministers and functionaries outside movement struggles and indigenous activism appeared on the scene. This became clear, for example, in my interview with the earlier mentioned leader of the CSCB, who told me that they did not agree with the president's decision to allow "neoliberals" to enter to work in the sphere of the state. He noted that when the MAS obtained political power, many politicians and public servants who had worked for previous governments suddenly changed their political party in order to retain their positions. One of young consultants, Vaclav, voiced the criticism that a phenomenon of political opportunism had emerged. Both earlier neoliberal technocrats and politicians, and also left-wing university scholars and union activists who previously had no interest in indigenous affairs, suddenly seemed to turn into *masistas* in order to maintain or achieve political power. The ex-leader of the COB and one of the founding members of the MAS, Filemon Escóbar (2008: 302–3), for example, has fiercely criticized that professional left-wing politicians from such parties as the MIR, the *Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista* (PCML) and Trotskyite strands were able to re-enter politics through the MAS, after the disappearance of their own parties. This corresponds to a major dilemma inherent in both revolutionary processes, and Marxist interpretations of them, as explicated by Foucault (1980: 59–60):

[I]n order to operate these State apparatuses which have been taken over but not destroyed, it will be necessary to have recourse to technicians and specialists. And in order to do this one has to call upon the old class which is acquainted with the apparatus, namely the bourgeoisie.

Although many of these middle-class professional politicians and technicians originated from the political left rather than the right, numerous indigenous activists complained that as they have not had previous experience in state administration, they have been bypassed by actors who are more familiar with the institutional and structural logics of the state. Those social movements and indigenous organizations that entered the state with indigenous policy ideas and political demands for a radical state transformation have become replaced, disciplined, and tamed, by those knowing how to run the state.

### 7.1.3 Racial Orders under Threat

Ethnic discrimination and racial prejudices became major topics when I met the Vice-Minister Ticona, at his office in the building of the Ministry of Justice located on the city's main avenue, *Prado*. Here, among public servants and lawyers who traditionally originated from, and had close relationships with, the political and economic elite, Ticona's presence as the political leader of the vice-ministry marked a difference. Having experienced discrimination in his own life, the driving force behind his political career was to change the course of things for future indigenous generations, as he recalled:

I am motivated by my [indigenous] identity. We cannot continue to be discriminated against, marginalized, and excluded. One feels bad when that happens. I have experienced it in my own community, in the cities. When I travelled in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, I was treated as an inferior person, I was humiliated, I was treated as *indio abajo*, *indio casero*.<sup>53</sup> As this cultural identity has been so discriminated against, we are now searching for equilibrium, equality, and complementarity...And I am telling my children, *hijo*, *hija*, my generation will be the last of *indios caseros*; you won't be called that. That motivates me; to continue to fight so that my children won't be treated as I was.

Dressed in traditional indigenous garments, Ticona, an indigenous leader from the *ayullu* Chullpa in North Potosí, today one of the poorest regions in the country, received a continual flow of visitors – most of them indigenous peoples from rural communities and organizations – to discuss legal matters. Yet occasionally middle-class public servants also popped in. This fitted perfectly with Ticona's development thinking as became evident when he started to elaborate his political visions further:

What we are dreaming of, what our vision is, is that there would be a complementarity between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples. What would this complementarity mean? It means that we respect the rights of the non-indigenous peoples and they respect our rights. We surely dance, sing, live, dress differently; our education is different; our languages are different; our forms of administering justice are different; but these differences have to be respected. We have something good in our cultures, and they have something good in their cultures; therefore, there should be complementarity between them.

Until Morales' regime, it had been rare to see people in traditional indigenous dress in public sector offices, especially indigenous women (Poma et al. 2008: 46). Now public servants were faced with a situation in which the executive was led by an indigenous president and various ministers of indigenous origins who had traditionally been considered to be “below” the ranks of urban, middle-class public servants.<sup>54</sup> This was not

<sup>53</sup> *Indio casero* is a term that refers to indigenous peoples working as servants or house laborers in middle and upper-class urban families.

<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Article 234 of the new constitution states that in order to have an access to public sector

an easy change for many public servants. One program director at the Ministry of Health, however, noted that some positive changes had now occurred:

What has changed is that we now work more according to intercultural criteria. In job announcements, for example, we are no longer making restrictions on who can apply for the job. In the case of secretaries, for example, one of the requirements that we used to have was that the person had to have a good appearance (*buena presencia*) and as a result, women in *pollera* [indigenous dress] were eliminated from the candidates. Today, you can already find many secretaries in the ministries in *pollera*.

Despite remarks like this, my interviews and interactions with public servants indicated that disdainful attitudes towards indigenous peoples still persisted. Many, for example, complained that indigenous peoples had entered political positions without having any capacity to run the state and with little or no formal education. This was considered unfair by many public servants who had been trained in universities for years. There were fears that in the name of decolonization, uneducated indigenous peoples aligned to the MAS would take the place of those public servants recruited by previous governments. One of the public servants mentioned that their biggest fear was losing their influence and the respect they felt to be their due. Another public servant from the Ministry of Education described the change that had occurred in the following way:

Most public servants originate from the middle class. What is attempted now is to have more social inclusion of those groups that have been denied access to public sector jobs before so that they would also have better opportunities to participate in the management of the state, to fulfill their needs according to the knowledge of their own realities. So, the public servant has to change his current thinking, and to open up his ideological horizon; to open up [his thinking] because he has been trained in the tradition of exclusion and the tradition of not attending to people in an equal way. This process has already begun and we have to continue with it, because we know that it is a long way to change the attitude of a public servant in such a way that he would want to serve a society that is composed of many cultures.

For some, the contemporary process of state transformation was a source of astonishment and an awakening call, as if they had only recently come to realize how diverse Bolivian society is, and how each person, despite their background, should have equal rights. One public servant stated in an innocently surprised way that “we have only now come to realize that there are different cultures and worldviews in our country. Now they should all have equal rights and equality of opportunities.” Others were more concerned to state that, in their opinion, indigenous ideas, such as the notion of *vivir bien*, signaled “backwardness

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jobs, one has to be fluent in at least two official languages of the country, meaning that in addition to Spanish, one has to know at least one indigenous language. In 2010, the parliament passed an Anti-Racism Law (*Ley 045 Contra el Racismo y Toda Forma de Discriminación*).

and decay”. During a break in one of the sectoral plan workshops, a public servant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told me that he does not have the slightest belief or interest in the notion of *vivir bien*. In his opinion, it was impossible that such a policy could work in the modern world; “Maybe it works in backward and static indigenous communities that don’t have any development,” he concluded. This parallels the remark that Goldstein has made of racialized juxtapositions between modernity and tradition, and progress and backwardness according to which “the countryside, defined in terms of ‘Indianness’ that is threatening and dangerous to whites, stands for the national past, contrasted with the urban centers that represent the nation’s future” (2004: 13). Yet due to his work, this public servant had to participate in the translation of indigenous ideas into bureaucratic practice; in the design of a sectoral plan for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These derogatory attitudes towards indigenous ideas as backward were further emphasized in the following quote from the public servant, mentioned above, who told me that he works for Morales’ government solely for the purpose of retaining a job. After an initial response related to the employment situation, he stated that many public servant suffered from the fear of losing influence and respect. Furthermore, he identified racism and fear as the main reasons for public servants to be hesitant and reluctant with the new policy framework and the state transformation process in general.

People don’t know about *vivir bien* in the ministry and they also don’t care. The first reason is racism. They don’t like Evo. Or actually, this is an understatement; they hate him. They hate him, because they don’t want to be governed by someone who is not like them. Those who were under them have arisen. For them, *vivir bien* is part of Indian thinking and they reject it. The second is the fear of the unknown; the fear of losing influence and respect. Thirty years ago the middle class was purely white but nowadays it is changing. The middle class is experiencing the fear of losing influence. [Indigenous] people under them were earlier like dogs and now, suddenly, they are governing [the country].

Although he talked about “them”, it became clear that, as a public servant, he also shared these same fears and prejudices about being governed by “backward dogs”. This affected the relationships of such public servants with newly elected ministers resulting in considerable antagonism and suspicion between them. Fernandez, who himself is not from indigenous origins, nevertheless identified this ethnic dimension as crucial in the contentions and power struggles that had emerged within state bureaucracy:

The most important reason for [contentions] are the prejudices against indigeneity. These prejudices were always underlying in dominant thinking patterns [of public servants] but now they have become visible in this conflict for power. It is pure racism: a complete and systematic denial of indigenous values, worldviews, and ways to understand the world, combined with an exaggerated estimation of all that is Western (*lo occidental*).

What, therefore, impedes the implementation of bureaucratic practice through indigenous ideas is, in Fernandez' opinion:

[T]he dominant thinking that is thoroughly penetrated by pejorative and negative conceptualizing of indigeneity...This colonial legacy has been strengthened by [state] power mechanisms...that are maintained despite the clear demographic reality which is that indigenous peoples are a majority in this country. The only way to combat this reality is to declare [indigenous peoples] to be inferiors...It is not accepted that an *indio* thinks better or that an *indio* wins.

In other words, the state bureaucracy has historically functioned as a disciplinary power that segments different social groups into specific ethnically defined positions. The rise of indigenous peoples into state administration and the adoption of indigenous state policy discourses have challenged the status quo between privileged and underprivileged groups. The tactics of keeping up with old bureaucratic practices is a way to hold on to ethnically defined hierarchical relations and structures that have been so deeply rooted in the Bolivian state-society relations. This, together with conceptual insecurities, fear of losing social position, and plain racism, has led to the practice of resistance among public servants: the maintenance of bureaucratic practice as it was prior to the introduction of indigenous ideas. This occurred notwithstanding policy discourses based on the idea that “democratization...should imply before anything else the process of decolonizing social, political, and cultural relations that maintain and reproduce racial social classification” (Quijano 2000: 568). In a political context of major indigenous change, the continuation of bureaucratic practice as usual is a way to maintain the disciplinary power of the state bureaucracy over those that it governs.

## 7.2 CENTRALIZATION OF STATE POWER

Before moving on with the ethnographic description and analysis of the decolonization of state bureaucracy, a few regional issues that have been identified as institutional and structural characteristics of Latin American state formation have to be taken into account. In the classic book on Latin American bureaucratic states, Chalmers (1977) described them as politicized rather than institutionalized states.<sup>55</sup> This is in stark contrast with academic ideas that started with the influence of Weber (2006 [1968]) who considered

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55 Today the idea that Latin American states – and states in the Global South more generally – are weakly institutionalized often crops up in normative and foreign policy related discussions of weak and/or failed states (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007; Rice and Patrick 2008; Rothberg ed. 2003). In the case of Bolivia, the notion of the weakness of the state has been one of the main motives for continuous state reforms (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 36).

modern bureaucracy neutral and technical, a rule-bound and clearly institutionalized entity. Chalmers has listed as the main characteristics of the politicized state: 1) the strong penetration of the state into society which means that individual political leaders have a great responsibility for the wellbeing of the population in question through patronage and benefits; 2) political battles that concentrate on the achievement of control and manipulation of the state because “being in power...gives the leader wide patronage and the authority to establish government programs to benefit existing supporters and attract new ones”; 3) the blurring of state bureaucracy and political regime, which Chalmers calls “bureaucratic politics”, meaning that administrative and institutional hierarchies are manipulated for the purpose of political support through the building of networks and hierarchies; and 4) the concentration of power in specific individuals and political leaders that have been skilled in building such networks and patronage because “such ‘personal power’ is all there is, and it is necessary for survival”. (Chalmers 1977: 30–3.)

This politicization of vertical links between political leaders and popular masses, a feature that for Chalmers (1977) characterizes the politicized state, is apt to result in clientelism, corporatism, and the centralization of state power. Although Chalmers wrote about these issues decades ago, at the time of the rise of authoritarian military regimes, his ideas are not completely outdated. In fact, the history of the Bolivian nation-state shows similar characteristics (Grindle and Domingo eds. 2003; Klein 2003; Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007). I have already looked at clientelism in the form of jobs in the earlier sections, demonstrating that despite discourses of change, the MAS regime is not immune to the characteristics that have for long defined the Bolivian state bureaucracy. Corporatism, however, is of major interest in the following sections. The third feature of the politicized state, which is also of interest to me, is the tendency to centralize political power. In the following, it is argued that despite decolonizing discourses, the Bolivian state bureaucracy entails various bureaucratic and authoritarian characteristics that have been influenced both by global development discourses and neoliberal expert regimes as discussed in the earlier chapter, and also by the nationalist revolution. As a result, what happens in the process of change today reflects long-term processes and effects of Bolivian state formation amidst a conglomeration of global, national, and local influences.

The first two sections focus on examining how social movements negotiate their positions within the state bureaucracy. The third section discusses the tendencies in state bureaucracy to centralize actions into the hands of a few political figures. The following sections examine whether political discourses of social movements and indigenous communities, or what I call governing pluralities – that is, plural political formulations governing both the state and indigenous territorial arrangements – will translate into practice or whether the state bureaucracy as a disciplinary power will rather convert them into disciplined masses.

### 7.2.1 Institutionalizing Social Movements

We know from the classic literature on Latin American revolutions that the main characteristic of the institutionalization of radical change is the dismantling or reorganization of political institutions inherited from old regimes (Domínguez and Mitchell 1977; Eckstein 1983; Selbin 1999). This has crystallized in the attempts to reorganize institutional structures from bottom up: as the creation of decentralized grassroots approaches to replace the earlier top-down tendencies of the centralized state apparatus (Selbin 1999). Indeed, the NDP (2006) states that social movements are crucial agents in the construction and democratization of the Bolivian Plurinational State: the state is to be transformed not from above but from below by social forces (*desde la sociedad*). During my fieldwork in late 2008 and early 2009, it was, indeed, common to hear a social movement representative state that, in contemporary Bolivia, social movements are in power. Leonilda Zurita, a coca-union leader, former senator, and the president of Bartolinas Sisas declared to me that:

We [peasant women's union] are part of the government; we are part of the political instrument [MAS]; we are pushing this process forward with President Evo Morales...As our president was born...from social movements, we oblige him... As he has emerged from the people, he has to stand by the people and by his social movements. In addition, he was born indigenous; we have a president who represents us. When we demand, he complies.

Zurita was here representing the voices of the peasant unions of *cocaleros* and Bartolinas, both at the core of the MAS as its founding members. Another representative from the CSCB, also a founding member of the MAS, agreed and stated that at the moment, the country was governed by five peasant unions and indigenous organizations: the CSCB, the CSUTCB, Bartolinas, the CIDOB, and the CONAMAQ. Indeed, he talked to me about the process of change in the first person plural: “we”. He declared that “we have been able to consolidate the process”; and that “we...are changing and transforming the country”.

These views challenge the idea common within new social movement theories that argue that, unlike guerrilla movements or left-wing trade unions of the previous decades, social movements, such as those based on ethnicity and indigenous identity, are not primarily organized to seize state power (Escobar and Alvarez eds. 1992a; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007). Instead, Heyman has argued that “overt politics may challenge the bureaucratic status quo” (2004: 495). The social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions that have arguably obtained political power in Bolivia, may be agents of popular actions and transformative struggles that, according to Heyman, can “constitute or reformulate an entire scenario of state agencies and state-populace relationships” (ibid.). However, scholars on revolutions and social movements rarely analyze what

happens to concrete bureaucratic practices after revolution or political uprising of social movements. This can be attributed to the uneasy coexistence of such terms as revolution and institutionalization largely because institutionalization is often associated with bureaucratization – the depoliticization of the politics of contention – and thereby with conservative, rather than liberating political tendencies (Selbin 1999: 17).

If we look at how social movements are concretely positioning themselves at the centers of the Bolivian state, two issues emerge: the peculiar formulation of the MAS and the foundation of the coordinating body of social movements, *Coordinadora Nacional por el Cambio* (CONALCAM). Let us first concentrate on the MAS. According to Albro (2005), the MAS is a mixture of political party and social movement. It uses both streets and parliament as political spaces, engaging with both direct protest actions and parliamentary negotiation tactics, not to mention its current governing role at the executive level. This is curious because in a sense, the formulation of the MAS is opposed to Sousa Santos' (2008) remark that we live in the era of anti-party fundamentalism among social movements and anti-movement fundamentalism among political parties. Nevertheless, the organizational structure of the MAS more closely resembles that of social movements than traditional political parties. At the mid-level, it is organized into ad-hoc thematic cabinets or public participatory assemblies, and at the local level, it coincides with local peasant unions. (Albro 2005: 441.) As a consequence, the almost hegemonic presence of the MAS at the centers of state power blurs the relations between the governing regime and social movements, and between the state and society.

Furthermore, attempts have been made by the governing regime to manage social movements as a response to increasing provocation from Morales' own support base (Morales 2012: 81–2). First, it created the Vice-Ministry of Coordination with Social Movements. Second, it has attempted to unite social movements into an autonomous, civil-society decision-making body on the basis of the 2003 Unity Pact. This coordinating body of social movements, the CONALCAM, was established in 2007 to advise the movement-based governing regime on social, political, and economic matters and to defend the process of change. In addition to the membership of the CSUTCB, the CSCB, the Bartolinas Sisas, the CIDOB and the CONAMAQ, it includes such unions and organizations as the union of female domestic laborers, the union for retired workers, and the Cochabamba-based union of the users of irrigation waters (*regantes*). One of the leaders of the CSCB told me that the aim of the CONALCAM is to function as the nexus between social movements and the government in such a way that political and economic issues of the country can be negotiated and planned together. In his opinion, it is a channel through which social movements make proposals to the government on what it should do and how it should be done because, as he noted:



The government is present solely in major cities and not in all corners of the country. Movement leaders, however, travel to all parts of the Bolivian territory and are present in even the remotest areas of the country. So, the leader gathers people's demands, picks up suggestions, and through CONALCAM, transmits them to the government. In this way, the CONALCAM makes the president aware of his errors and of the problems of the country.

The CONALCAM, indeed, functions in close cooperation directly with the president and a few other political figures. In this sense, social movements do have a role at the center of the executive powers in influencing state policies. Although loosely institutionalized, the Bolivian media, for example, has argued that the CONALCAM has an equal amount, or even more, power than ministers in the executive (La Razon 2008). Indeed, this vision has been shared by the president who has expressed the view that the CONALCAM should become the highest authority for making political decisions, even ranking above the ministerial cabinet (República de Bolivia 2008b: 9). Although stated to be independent from the state, the relationship between the CONALCAM and the state is blurred because some of the ex-leaders of the CONALCAM, for example, function as senators or parliamentarians for the MAS.

Though blurring the boundaries between state actors and movement activists, both the composition of the governing MAS and the establishment of the CONALCAM assign social movements a role in the rule of the state. Researchers on contemporary Bolivia have conceptualized this movement-based regime with phrases such as indigenous popular hegemony (Postero 2010) and state acting like movement (Gustafson 2010). Although the involvement of social movements in running the state can be considered a sign of the democratization of previously marginalized and excluded groups, it is, nevertheless, important to look at it from another point of view as well: whether this form of institutionalization of movement actions can be seen as a way to co-opt and control social movements. Let us look at this critical issue in the following section.

### **7.2.2 Corporatism as the Taming of Movement Actions**

In the governmental two-year implementation report, Evo Morales, although noting that the establishment of the CONALCAM has been one of the major achievements of his administration, complained that not all social movements had joined it (Presidencia de la República 2008b: 9). Although Morales has claimed that movements belonging to the CONALCAM do not have to be militant members of the MAS, there has been criticism by unions and organizations that this coordinating body has been co-opted by the governing regime in order to promote its political goals. The CONALCAM has been said to function as “officialdom’s loyal ‘shock troops’” (Morales 2012: 82). One leader of the COB, for example, complained to me that the CONALCAM lacks independence

as it is “a group of social organizations affined to the government”. As suggested earlier, the CONALCAM, as the coordinating body of a large number of social movements, has the potential to make indigenous and grassroots voices heard by the executive. The more dangerous implication of the institutionalization of social movements is that of harnessing social movements and indigenous organizations to the agendas of the governing regime and silencing critical political voices.

The relationship between the executive and the CONALCAM resembles to an extent co-governing arrangements from the era prior to neoliberal reforms. During the state-centered nationalist revolution, the most visible representations of the emerging alliance between national bourgeoisie and the popular classes were the political pacts or co-governing arrangements that were used to “co-opt social groups and individuals into the system” (Moore 1990: 36). Morales has demonstrated that “the MNR attempted to institutionalize the revolution by a corporatist system of party control over civil society and the military” (2012: 579). In the early 1950s, the COB appointed three ministers to the ministerial cabinet. The head of the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* (FSTMB) – the miners’ union that during the 1940s had opted for an armed workers’ revolution – became the leader of the COB and the miners became the radical wing of the party. (Klein 2003: 213–4.) There was a constant oppositional Trotskyite faction within the COB and within the miners union (Lazar 2008: 249). In Latin American political theory, these co-governing arrangements have been defined as a form of corporatism which is seen as a typical feature of Latin American politicized states (Chalmers 1977). In the classic text on the subject, O’Donnell (1977: 49) has defined the corporatism that has emerged from the 1930s onwards as:

[T]hose structures through which functional, nonterritorially based organizations officially represent ‘private’ interests before the state, formally subject for their existence and their right of representation to authorization or acceptance by the state, and where such rights is reserved to the formal leaders of those organizations, forbidding and excluding other legitimate channels of access to the state for the rest of its members.

The early history of relations between the MNR and the COB was an example *par excellence* of corporatist and clientelistic arrangements between the state and unions. The repressive military dictatorships that took over the state from the MNR continued with, and intensified, corporatist arrangements, but this time it was with peasant unions rather than with workers (Gray Molina 2003: 350; Klein 2003: 223). In Europe, similar arrangements between governing regimes and labor unions were developed, as Harvey (2005: 11–2) has described:

The business cycle was successfully controlled through the application of Keynesian fiscal and monetary policies. A social and moral economy (sometimes supported by a strong sense

of national identity) was fostered through the activities of an interventionist state. The state in effect became a force field that internalized class relations. Working-class institutions such as labour unions and political parties of the left had a very real influence within the state apparatus.

Progressive ideas such as workers' rights and issues concerning social and economic equality were co-opted to policy agendas by mainstream political parties, "demonstrating that co-option is not necessarily a negative result for the social movement" (Prevost et al. 2012b: 8). Consequently, corporatism can be analyzed from two perspectives. According to one: it "opens up institutional areas of the state to the representation of organized interests of civil society" (O'Donnell 1977: 48). This resonates with what occurred in Europe during Keynesian economic policy, as expressed by Harvey above. The other possibility, possibly more likely to occur in 'politicized states' such as Bolivia, is that through corporatism, the state penetrates society and establishes control over it; that is, there occurs "conquest and subordination by the state of organizations of the civil society" (O'Donnell 1977: 48). At the same time, Migdal (1988) has suggested that corporatism can be considered a response to the weak state / strong society dichotomy in which social forces continuously dispute the legitimacy, authority, and sovereignty of the state. Foweraker, Landman and Harvey (2003: 69) have observed that in Latin America:

[T]he leadership of social organizations (trade unions, business associations, peasant groups, etc.) was either imposed or tightly regulated by the state... Participation of citizens was therefore restricted to those forms deemed useful for the goals of the state. Other forms of participation were marginalized or outlawed through violent repression. Elections were held, but politicians and parties gained legitimacy from how well they could access government largesse in an ever-expanding network of institutionalized clientelism.

Lazar (2008) has suggested that this dual character of corporatist arrangements has been an integral part of Bolivian politics. On the one hand, movements, unions and organizations have always represented a potential danger to the stability of the governing regime through contentious politics. Therefore, they were often included in direct negotiations with it. Tapia (2007) has referred to this as an alternative form of democracy in which democracy was more than voting: it included direct participation in governmental decision-making in deliberative arenas that co-governing arrangements had created. On the other hand, "collective organizations can certainly be the means by which Bolivian governments control their citizens" (Lazar 2008: 250). In regards contemporary Bolivia, Regalsky has written that "what began as a demand for the reconfiguration of the state and an attempt to achieve recognition for communal indigenous autonomies has had its representative organizations subordinated to the state, thus reinforcing the system of party-based political representation" (2010: 47). This dubious role of the CONALCAM was even recognized by some of the political leaders of MAS, with one of the vice-

ministers, for example, complaining to me that there were no institutional mechanisms through which ministries could work more closely with it. The role of the CONALCAM, he suggested, rather seemed to be in defending governmental political goals by keeping social movements peaceful through the generation of their internal control.

In addition to disciplining pro-government movements internally, there were also signs that social movements co-opted by the governing regime were used to suppress other civil society movements. In 2011, for example, when the COB organized workers' strikes to demand higher wage increases, the governing regime confronted it through the CONALCAM. Hence it "pitted the pro-government social movements of the CONALCAM, primarily the peasant unions, *cocaleros* and 'Bartolinas', against the workers' movements" (Morales 2012: 82). Additionally, through CONALCAM, critiques of governmental development schemes in some parts of the lowlands by indigenous movements have been suppressed by accusing them of being agents for the US or the right-wing political opposition. Subsequently, cracks also appeared in the peasant-indigenous alliance (see 8.2.3). Rightfully, the criticism has been made that, instead of processes of democratization and de-centralization through indigenous ideas, there have rather emerged processes of centralization of power which are legitimized through the nominal participation of social movements (Zalles 2008: 6). The establishment of the CONALCAM is one example of the institutionalization of new practices that balance on the cusp between new forms of democratization and historical patterns of bureaucratic centralization. Flavio, one of the young consultants, wondered about this contradictory role:

To be honest, I am confused whether this government promotes dialogue or whether it wants to impose things. The inclusion of those social sectors, such as peasant unions and indigenous organizations, that did not participate in politics before makes one think that the government is interested in dialogue. On the other hand, those who do not agree with the government are judged to be enemies that have to be destroyed at any cost. There are these two contradicting poles.

This seems to indicate that alongside promoting increased movement participation, there are also aims to tame criticism, confrontation, and challenges to the governing regime, an issue to which I will turn more in detail in Chapter Eight.

### **7.2.3 Personalization of Power**

Some ministers and vice-ministers were also disappointed by their own experiences within state mechanisms. Aguirre, for example, complained to me that although state discourses and policy ideas are new, state structures and institutions remain the same and run on their own logics. An enthusiastic defender of social movements and indigenous

organizations, Prada told me that what had unfortunately happened was that when the MAS entered the government, “it accepted the legacy of the old state, its ancient practices, architecture, norms, and behavior”. Despite discourses of decolonization of the state and state transformation through indigenous ideas, the MAS, as a conglomeration of various social movements, entered the state whose colonial practices had been constructed and maintained through hierarchical forms of disciplinary power often based on ethnic discrimination. Instead of transforming the state through movement logics and indigenous ideas, Prada concluded dejectedly that “in three years of managing the state, the MAS had been swallowed by the state”. The disciplinary boundary between the state and social movements that had been shaken by the rise of social movements to the centers of state power were being re-constructed.

Traditionally, public policy decision-making has been executed from top down, and from abroad, through the influence of IFIs and international development agencies, without the recognition of a variety of local demands and needs (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 65). In the case of limiting the influence of IFIs and development agencies over Bolivia’s internal affairs, the idea of decolonization – “the recovery of the capacity to decide” (NDP 2007) – seems to have functioned. The formulation of development priorities have clearly been transferred from foreign donors to state actors, as has been indicated in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, this occurred at the expense of technical experts and consultants as was described by Flavio, who commented to me that “all negotiations related to development projects, contracts and general guidelines are in the hands of those in high hierarchical positions”. He continued to explain that:

Because of the institutional instability, Bolivian institutions depend a lot on their leaders. Before, there was a clear dependency on the president and on the political power of ministers but now, as the MAS is a new organization that is not well consolidated, there are very few well-known figures on whom the ministries could rely. In many ministries, there are political leaders that public servants don’t know at all. Therefore, decision making on many issues falls to the president and two or three ministers that have political power and influence.

To some extent, Flavio seemed to imply here that public servants expected to have strong political guidance for their work. Yet as was previously suggested, antagonism and suspicion existed between public servants and new ministers for ideological, and even ethnic, reasons. Flavio’s remark here also corresponds to the idea that because Bolivian state structures and institutions change each time the new governing regime is elected, institutional stability is weak (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 253). As a result, the state may be easily identified with specific authorities and political figures. This is a characteristic feature of Latin American politicized states where, as Chalmers (1977) has explained, the personalization of power is common. In the absence

of institutionalized rules of conduct and in the presence of instrumental use of political systems, there is a higher possibility for the centralization of state power in politicized than in institutionalized states. Drawing on Weber's concept, Vélez (2000) has called 'patrimonial politics' a form of political power that derives directly from the political leader. Even in the era of representative democracy, this personalization of power that is associated with strong man is widespread. According to Vanden and Prevost, the president is often understood as the personification of the state and national patron and consequently, "political leadership in Latin America has often tended to be authoritarian, with the political leader exercising a great deal of power and control" (2002: 122).

The case of Evo Morales is a curious extension of this phenomenon as he is the head of the state but also originates from the peasant unions. One Bolivian development expert at the World Bank actually stated to me that, in his opinion, the "government is Evo". "He has a very strong role in the executive," the person said, "but as the union leader, he has a lot of capacity to negotiate within social movements and peasant unions". Although Morales may have a lot of room for maneuver at the intersections of the state and society, the personalization of state power certainly contradicts the ideals of indigenous governance. Harris, for example, has emphasized that for the Aymara, authority "is multiple and shifting, rather than focused on a particular figure" (1982: 48). Additionally, obligatory annual rotation of community leaders poses "extreme limitations to power" (ibid.: 68). In regards to these contradictions between 'the Spanish form of rule' and 'the Andean form of rule', Patzi, for example, suggested, as already noted earlier, that in order to avoid the centralization of power, political leaders at the level of the state should be rotating. Given that Morales and García Linera are opting for a third consequent presidential term, countering what is stated at the constitution, this is not the case.

While the practice of government and discipline as forms of power function through specific techniques, modes, and details of bureaucratic practice, as has been described in Chapters Six and Seven, the identification of the forms of power of specific authorities or individuals – often done in the examination of Latin American states – brings to the fore another form of governance. Li (2007), who has suggested that practices of rule in the Global South often articulate between contradictory forms of government, discipline, and sovereign authority, relates the question of sovereignty to coercion and violence. This is an issue to which I turn more in detail in Chapter Eight in which I focus on the contentious construction of the plurinational state at the intersections of national sovereignty and indigenous sovereignties (self-governance), with an additional commentary on the role of violent and repressive authority.

### 7.3 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has argued that state bureaucracy as a disciplinary power challenges the contemporary process of Bolivian state transformation as new indigenous ideas collide with existing bureaucratic-institutional structures of the Bolivian nation-state. Although it appeared, on the surface, that public servants complied with political commands to translate the notion of *vivir bien* into bureaucratic practice, a closer look at their views showed that their responses varied from compliance in order to maintain employment, through quiet resistance visible in the continuation of old bureaucratic practices, to outright rejection on the basis of ethnic and racial prejudices and discrimination. The rise of new political leaders from the ranks of previously marginalized populations, and the concomitant shift in state policy discourses, has questioned the technical authority and prestige of predominantly white and urban middle class public servants by bringing to the fore indigenous alternatives. Nevertheless, the structure of the MAS as a new political organization and the nature of the Bolivian state as a politicized entity have enabled public servants to maintain firm positions at the operating centers. The coloniality of the state and its disciplinary characteristics, although strongly questioned, are firmly rooted through the continuation of previous bureaucratic practices and through the political maneuvering of public servants. Although the institutionalization of social movements enhances movement participation in state affairs, co-governing arrangements may also function to discipline and control social movements by their co-option into state institutional structures. This implies the taming of radical movement politics and alternative political voices. Indeed, there are indications of centralization in bureaucratic power and authority.

In conclusion, there is a rupture between decolonizing discourses and bureaucratic practices. This complex and contested relationship shows that various forms of rule and power are constantly placed into interaction by various kinds of actors trying to find space for maneuver. State bureaucracy, therefore, is a conglomeration of governmental and disciplinary forms of rule, with traces of personalization of power (or, what Foucault would call sovereign authority). Therefore, alongside the radically democratizing idea of governing pluralities, there are effects of the disciplinary logics of state bureaucracy. As a disciplinary power, the state bureaucracy controls the masses by producing and maintaining the imaginary boundary between the state and social forces. In the next chapter, I move into examining the territorial aspects of centralization and decentralization in more detail by examining the practice of plurinationalism.

## 8 SOVEREIGNTY MATTERS: PLURINATIONALISM AS A BATTLEFIELD OVER SELF-DETERMINATION

The new constitution defines Bolivia as the Plurinational State of Bolivia (República de Bolivia 2008a). It refers to a decolonized and decentralized state that comprises a conglomeration of various *naciones*: autonomous indigenous territories, municipalities, and regions (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 485). Sousa Santos (2008) links the idea of plurinationalism to the difference between two concepts of nation: the first references liberal understandings in which the nation is equated with the state, meaning that people residing in the state's territory belong to a single nation; the second derives from indigenous peoples' community traditions and cultural identification, in which the nation is portrayed as a unit of self-determination that has its own traditional political and economic institutions independent of the state (although within its borders). Plurinationalism, therefore, implies a transformation of the political rationality that assimilates nation with state, obliging a view of the state as a conglomeration of various nations (ibid.: 148–9).

Article 2 of the constitution states that given the precolonial existence of indigenous nations and territories, it guarantees self-determination of indigenous nations within the structures of the Plurinational State of Bolivia; this includes the right to autonomy, territories, self-governance, and the recognition of indigenous institutions (República de Bolivia 2008a: 13). Drawing on the institutional experiences of the multicultural reforms of the mid-1990s, indigenous autonomies (*autonomía indígena originario campesina*) can be achieved through the TCOs (*Tierras Comunitarios de Origen*) or through the OTBs (*Organizaciones Territoriales de Base*) in municipalities with an indigenous majority (Albó and Romero 2009). In their 2009 study, Albó and Carlos Romero – appointed Minister of Autonomies that same year (later the Minister of the Presidency and the Minister of the Interior) – enumerated 143 TCOs, of which 84 had been officially registered by INRA. Additionally, of 327 Bolivian municipalities, 187 can be categorized as indigenous. In 2010, eleven TCOs and municipalities applied for indigenous autonomy of which five have been able to proceed with the process, while others have stagnated in internal conflicts. A criticism has been raised of the increasing role of the central state in hampering the process of indigenous sovereignty (Postero 2013: 45–6). The state funding mechanisms, for example, impede the autonomous regions or municipalities from collecting taxes or



raising funds, while the conditions and rules of the Law of Autonomies are so intricate that only a few communities have been able to qualify for the status (ibid.: 46).

This chapter examines how the state transformation process has become a battlefield over the practice of plurinationalism. As I showed in Chapter Four, indigenous terminologies, such as the notion of *suma qamaña*, have been employed to legitimate the revival of indigenous self-governance and the control of lands and territories. In the practice of government, however, the constitutional recognition of indigenous self-determination raises major questions related to the redistribution of resources, such as lands, territories, and natural resources. The question emerges of how, and by whom, the process of redistribution – very much needed in a country that suffers major inequalities on the basis of class and ethnicity – should be implemented. In this situation, articulations between the state, the ruling economic elite, and indigenous and other popular movements become crucial. As a consequence, the shift from recognition to redistribution (see Fraser 1997; Hale 2002) has fuelled the movement of struggles over the meanings of indigenous policy towards struggles over resources. The question of sovereignty opens up a contested set of articulations between various forms of power and rule and political contestation – the focus of this chapter.

Firstly, I recall the Bolivian experiences of decentralization that frame the contemporary phenomena. Secondly, I examine the discourse of plurinationalism within the executive, where the conflicting views of movement scholars, indigenous activists, and state-centered nationalists challenge the idea of plurinational state as a conglomeration of local self-governing indigenous nations. In the practice of government, the state-led modernization agendas most prevalent in the new governmental program (*Rumbo a una Bolivia Líder: 2010–2015 Programa de Gobierno*), seem to be taking precedence over discourses of *vivir bien*. Thirdly, I move into discussing the views of the political opposition, social movements and indigenous organizations concerning autonomous arrangements. It is demonstrated that the unifying agenda of *vivir bien* is fragmenting into power conflicts in which some are aligned with the governing regime, while others who have retrieved the strategy of politics as critical challenge are being violently repressed by the government in a demonstration of sovereign authority of the state.

## 8.1 EXPERIMENTATIONS WITH DECENTRALIZATION

Bolivia has undergone a relatively long experience of administrative decentralization. Started during the mid-1990s multicultural reforms, with heavy support from IFIs and international development agencies, the Bolivian process of decentralization was a systemic counterpart to larger global processes leading into a ‘postnational constellation’ (Habermas 2001) or a ‘transnational public sphere’ (Fraser 2007). It was perceived that

“decentralization, as the transfer of powers from the central to lower levels of government, arguably has the potential to make local politicians more accountable, citizens more participative and local governments more responsive to local needs” (Montambeault 2008: 114). To an extent, the Bolivian process of decentralization enhanced indigenous self-governance through the TCOs and indigenous political participation in municipalities through the OTBs (Albó 2008; Postero 2007).

While responding to indigenous political demands, the aim of state restructuring was to address “the traditional concentration and centralization of power that was thought to have characterized the Bolivian state” (Urioste 2009: 111). Although some state institutions had also been decentralized during the nationalist revolution, with the widest territorial effects in the social sector, infrastructure and national defense, there was a strong concentration of power in state ministries. To a large extent, decision-making processes were not delegated from specific state authorities to regional or local levels. (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 253–4.) While the aim of the process of decentralization was to change this, it has been argued that although municipalities were assigned more responsibility in implementing funds for municipal development, in fact they had very little autonomy in decision making regarding funds that were centrally assigned by those governing the state (ibid.: 250).

In the contemporary context, the NDP states that the Bolivian nation-state is centralized and oligarchic, and that this coloniality has led to social discrimination, political exclusion and the neglect of indigenous rights. The idea of ‘pluri-nation’, on its part, refers to the prevalence of plural identities and (indigenous) nations in which forms of (indigenous) self-governance prevail. In this sense, the notion of plurinationalism entails the ideal of radical decentralization of governance. In the context of Ecuador, where similar processes have occurred, Walsh has suggested that “the concept of plurinational state not only places into question the neocolonial systems of governance that construct and assume a hegemonic homogeneity, but, more importantly, positions as key the agency of indigenous peoples in restructuring these systems and in determining, organizing, and administering their own development” (2008: 511).

Yet when we look at the practice of indigenous policy ideas at the level of state bureaucracy, the picture becomes more complex and in many ways contested. One vice-minister representing the MSM complained to me that there exist serious contradictions between the idea of plurinationalism and the everyday functioning of state bureaucracy. He voiced the criticism, for example, that the making of sectoral plans described in Chapter Six had not been delegated to regional and municipal levels as, in his opinion, it should have been, according to the decentralized logics of plurinationalism. In his opinion, most political actors and public servants did not really comprehend the extent of transformation needed in state practices in order to respond to indigenous policy ideas. Instead, he suggested that bureaucratic centralization (*centralismo*) still prevails. As an

example, he told me about a public servant from the Ministry of Development Planning who had suggested to the vice-minister that they could centrally plan development strategies for all Bolivian municipalities. Ever since the decentralization of the mid-1990s, municipal development plans have been designed through participatory methods in each municipality that total more than three hundred.

In relation to this, Flavio, from the Ministry of Development Planning, explained to me that he had been advised that planning and monitoring of policy were the responsibility of public institutions and ministries, and that there was no need to involve social movements and indigenous organizations in these tasks. Furthermore, he stated that evaluations and impact assessments of policy practices were made for the information and use of the executive and the parliament. These examples seem to suggest that the centralizing tendencies of the Bolivian state bureaucracy were still actively present. The coordinator of indigenous affairs at one of the central ministries took up this contradiction between state bureaucracy and plurinationalism in discussion:

The central administration still imposes things. We know that we have the new constitution. We know that we have the idea of [indigenous] autonomies. But we have no idea how to relate between the central government and autonomies. There is this difficulty and uncertainty of what is going to happen in the future.

The tension between policy discourses and bureaucratic practices that this excerpt exemplifies, points to the existence of various forms of power and rule, and the contradictions between them. Instead of de-centralizing the country, the state-led process of enhancing plurinationalism and indigenous autonomy may rather function as a tool for further state control over territories and peoples. Indeed, it has been argued that the Bolivian state is a bureaucratic state with a tendency to decentralize without equality. It is, in many ways, “a centralized state that enhances inequality and, in other ways, a decentralized state that does not enhance equality” (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2007: 271).

## **8.2 THE LIMITS OF UNITY: STRUGGLES WITHIN THE MAS' EXECUTIVE**

In this section, I discuss the views of plurinationalism and indigenous self-determination within the executive. As Chapter Five showed, unity within the executive has been constructed through portraying the notion of *vivir bien* as local alternative to Western development and global capitalism; the MAS and its leaders presented a unified front in discourses and protests against neoliberal colonialism and various forms of imperialism. Once attention shifted to governing, however, differences within the executive have

become visible. In the following sections, I argue that in the practice of governing, the united MAS protest front has divided along lines of different ideas on development of the state and economy. As a result, there is an ongoing battle over the authority to institutionalize new forms of governing within the practice of plurinationalism.

### 8.2.1 Movement Scholars' Visions of Plurinationalism

As social movement scholars and university intellectuals, members of the *Grupo Comuna* like Prada and García Linera had expanded on the democratizing potential of social movements – or multitudes, masses, and indigenous-plebeians, as they call them (García Linera et al. eds. 2001; García Linera et al. eds. 2007; Tapia et al. eds. 2004). In the corridors of state power, however, the idea of direct democracy was shifted from social movements to the mechanisms of the state. Democratizing forums like people's assemblies, *cabildos*, and other local deliberative mechanisms, present in workers' unions, peasant unions, and *ayullus* at local levels, were thought to be institutionalized at the level of the state through the notion of plurinationalism. Through plurinationalism, the nation-state that García Linera (2004) describes as an illusory collectivity and as the synthesis of the interests of dominant classes, provides room for the practice of direct democracy in which multiple political formations and plural conglomerations of people decide for themselves. Following this, the intellectual ideas and ideological formations behind plurinationalism crystallized in the assumption that the state would be absorbed by a plurality of nations such as those structured around traditional *ayullus* of the Aymara, as was explained to me by Prada:

The idea of the plurinational state was that it would cease to be state; it would be absorbed by [indigenous] nations..., social practices, decisions by society, by social assemblies. The idea of the plurinational state was that it would supersede the dialectic contradictions between state and society... The idea of the plurinational state was that if the state was plural, it would no longer be a state, because it would be opened up for a plurality of multitudes...It is not a unity, it is not homogeneous, and it is not a general will: it is, rather various wills, multiple practices...The plurinational state was supposed to open gates, to deinstitutionalize...in such a way that politics would not be exercised through [state] bureaucracy and hierarchical arrangements but fundamentally through social dynamics and the exercise of direct actions and democratic practices...

Prada's explanation echoed the theorizing and ideological thought of post-Marxist and post-structuralist movement scholars who conceptualize indigenous movements as an example of new kinds of political activism based on multiple identity demands and plural political formations. The ideological construction of the Bolivian Plurinational State is based on the idea that these pluralities have a legitimate right to govern through self-

determination and autonomous arrangements. This view was also influenced by Gramsci's writings on 'regulated society', that is, "a state without a state" (Gramsci 2006[1971]) of which the *Grupo Comuna* has written (see, for example, Tapia et al. eds. 2004). With the process of decolonization, the power of the state was to be redistributed to various nations governed by what Prada called during our discussion, the "plurality of multitudes". By "multitudes" Prada referenced the idea of social movements as agents of social and political transformation and radical democratization inspired by Hardt and Negri (2005). His main emphasis was on the challenge that multidimensional, heterogeneous social movements posed for the Bolivian nation-state, as he explained to me:

Multitudes oppose the state. They are not solely 'people', not a unity; they are not homogeneous, they do not represent a general will; they represents various wills, desires, multiple practices...The idea was that the plurinational state would overcome dialectic relations between the state and society, and would convert society into the primary scene for political performances...This is the old utopia that is in the Communist Manifesto itself; an old utopia that existed in self-managed projects [*proyectos autogestionarios*], anarchist projects; even in Bolivian social movements from 2000–2005. [A utopia of] strong self-management [*autogestión*], where multiple self-governing mechanisms occur; where decision-making is the work of...mobilized masses...

As Prada suggested, his expectation for the current Bolivian state transformation process was that through the practice of plurinational statehood, a radically democratizing assemblage of autonomous nations and plural governing bodies would replace the bureaucratic state. Yet Prada hinted that his concrete experiences within the state bureaucracy had demonstrated to him that this was not the case. In terms of the notion of *suma qamaña* in policy making, Prada noted that:

Unfortunately *suma qamaña* appeared in the national development plan in a very composite and combined way; there is the conceptualization of *suma qamaña*, but there is also the administration of natural resources. There is *suma qamaña*, but also social services. That is to say, it appears as kind of a pact between different tendencies within the MAS, and this is what is creating a very complicated discourse. What the MAS elaborated [as policy] is a combination; it is a very complicated mixture. There are indigenous visions, but there are also liberal, socialist, and industrialist visions.

Following this, various critical issues concerning the practice of government started to be raised during our discussion. Prada, who served as the MAS' Vice-Minister of Strategic Planning in 2010 but who has since become a fierce critic of the MAS (especially in relation to the TIPNIS conflict discussed in 8.2.3), raised concerns about how the centralizing tendencies of state bureaucracy were challenging the democratizing potential of change. He told me that he had already become conscious of these during the extremely contested process of the Constituent Assembly in which he served as the MAS assembly

member. Instead of becoming a forum for deliberation and democratic participation, Prada recalled that political conflicts between the executive and the political opposition and internal fights within different sectors of the MAS hampered any attempts at creating alternative ways of doing politics. He was also clearly disappointed with the fact that the executive had intervened with the process that was supposed to be an example of new forms of people's democracy.

Prada told me that he feared that rather than handing over decision-making processes to social movements and *naciones*, the executive would centralize more power in itself. Although the idea of plurinationalism was inscribed in the new constitution, Prada suggested that “we have to avoid the process of de-constitutionalization that can happen not solely through conservative sectors of the opposition, but through our own conservative sectors within social movements, the MAS and the government itself”. Based on his experiences within the executive, he suggested that:

There is going to be the incorporation of indigenous autonomies [to policy work], but the executive will not take the initiative to convert them into real organs of power. Much is going to depend on the capacity of social movements to free themselves from the tutelage of the state and to retake initiative, spontaneity and the leadership of the process through constant mobilization... I think that the executive is, instead, going to convert the state into the real organ of power...

This quotation hinted that alongside the promotion of indigenous self-governance, there was a move to centralize power in the central state. This corresponds with my own observations among public servants and state institutions presented in Chapter Seven. Prada commented that the logics of the state differed from the intellectual discourses that they had as university scholars. Dunkerley has, indeed, commented that “intellectuals who occupy public office are unusual prey to charges of hypocrisy as they scale speedily down from the heights where theory and sheer high-mindedness inevitably locate them, but apart from the tell-tale loquaciousness of the guild, they bequeath plenty of evidence of ‘where they come from’” (2007: 145). In continuation, Prada suggested that some radical activists and intellectuals, such as García Linera, who had earlier opted for radical democratization through social movements, had, in the service of the state, been converted into fierce promoters of state-led development.

To the disappointment of many, García Linera has increasingly started to use the term ‘Andean-Amazonian capitalism’ (*capitalismo andino-amazónico*), which promotes an idea of nationalist capitalism as an interventionist state and an alliance between social classes with indigenous touches, “a souvenir of the 1952 nationalist revolution”, as one analyst from the CEDLA noted to me in an interview. Influenced by the *cepalista* ideas, Colpari (2011) has argued that, in this thinking, indigenous agendas have been bypassed by ideas of import substitution industrialization, the expansive role of the state, and redistribution

of resources through the agency of the state. Instead of promoting radically new kinds of alternatives to capitalism, as was expected on the basis of his writings (discussed in Chapter Four), the realism of policy making and state bureaucracy had turned García Linera into a promoter of the legacies of the Bolivian nationalist revolution. He started to view, as Webber notes, “capitalist industrialization as a necessary transition between today’s mode of production and the socialism that might be possible in a century’s time” (2011: 189–90). This view correlated with classic stagist ideas among Latin American communist parties (Webber and Carr 2013b: 9). However, while recognizing the circulation of nationalist revolutionary discourses among the executive, Webber (2011: 203–4) has suggested that concrete changes in the prevailing political economy are much fewer today than they were during the nationalist revolution: there is less state-led industrialization, less land reform, less control of labor force, and fewer nationalizations. To conclude, Webber (ibid.: 225–6) has noted that:

The tendencies toward nostalgic relapse in the current MAS administration and particularly in the writings of the vice president – an orientation toward multiclass developmentalist coalitions, a renewal of certain ISI objectives within a reconstituted neoliberalism, and an insufficiently critical theoretical evaluation of classical structuralism – helps to explain the disappointing failure of the Morales government to break with neoliberalism...

The critique of the course of the events was shared by many indigenous activists, an issue to which I turn next.

## 8.2.2 Indigenous Culturalists and NGO Pragmatists

After having been fired from the position of Minister of Education, Patzi became a fierce critic of governmental policy and practice. In March 2010, Patzi launched a new political party *Integración Para el Cambio* (IPC), in order to run as its candidate in the 2014 presidential elections. As an indigenous culturalist, he accused the MAS of both continuing with neoliberal reforms and of being co-opted by left-wing actors. In January 2009, when I discussed this with him, he claimed that after his initial interest in indigenous ideas, Morales started to favor left-wing politics at the cost of indigenous approaches. Patzi stated to me that:

[T]he president opted for the indigenous approach no longer being present. Instead, the leftist approach would; ideologically speaking, currently there are more people in the government from the traditional left [than from the indigenous strand]; from parties that had already disappeared [from Bolivia’s political history]. Evo has revived this. The *indigenismo* is only used through left-wing language, as was done before.

The bypassing of indigenous activists in the corridors of power has led to internal contestations within the executive of the MAS. At the centre of these contestations are negotiations between indigenous culturalists and left-wing actors over the proper role of the state in respect to plurinationalism. Patzi described these contestations to me in the following way:

The left...has not been able to surpass state control [*estatismo*] in two respects: the economy and social rights; this is where the conflict is. They think that the state should function as an enterprise, and that it should be the state that takes care of the social sector. Meanwhile, *los indigenistas* do not believe in a state-led economy. They favor a community economy. This is a fundamental difference between the left and *indigenismo*. In economic terms, the left promotes state enterprises...*Los indigenistas*, instead, promote community economy, community democracy, and community justice...But the left is present in the government, and they promote state enterprises.

With this statement, Patzi was suggesting that instead of promoting indigenous self-determination, the executive is now governed by authorities whose interest is to enhance state-led modernization schemes through the active agency of the state in economic and social affairs. While the Morales' regime was opposing the establishment of global actors such as IFIs and transnational corporations as today's sovereigns (Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Li 2007), the regime was, however, expanding the role of the Bolivian state in the very same areas, including resource extraction. This was overwhelming the idea of indigenous self-determination of their own territories through *usos y costumbres*.

Patzi's views were shared by many indigenous activists. At the meeting that was held between indigenous scholar Simon Yampara and public servants at the Ministry of Development Planning, Yampara expressed strong criticism towards the left-wing tendencies of the governing MAS. Although they have the struggle against neoliberalism in common, Yampara suggested that the goals of the left and the goals of indigenous movements are fundamentally different. "Do we want to continue with the Bolivian nation-state or [to reconstruct the] *Kollasuyo*?" Yampara asked, and continued by noting that "they require different matrixes". The first, in his opinion, was a state-led modernization process that the left was opting for and the second was the reconstruction of *Kollasuyo*, a conglomeration of community-based, self-governing indigenous nations. The latter perspective was being bypassed in state governance because, in Yampara's opinion, indigenous peoples were merely symbolically present while real power was in the hands of others:

Indigenous peoples are symbolically in power because of President Evo, but the rest [of those in power] belong to the old left and, therefore, they are state and development-oriented [*estatalista y desarrollista*]...So there is a dichotomy between Evo, the Aymara, who is merely a symbol, and the old Marxist left with their dreams of industrialization and the strong state...



While indigenous activists and left-wingers were unified in their struggles against neoliberal colonialism, a major suspicion among indigenous activists of the involvement of left-wing actors in the executive seemed to have developed. As was explained in Chapter Seven, many felt that political opportunism was bringing politicians and technicians to work for the MAS who had previously served other kinds of ideologies. Partly, as I pointed out, there was a real demand for actors that were familiar with the logics of the state but this did not negate the feelings on the part of many indigenous activists and unionists that their party was being taken over. Indeed, suggestions have been made that notions such as decolonization or plurinationalism that have arisen in indigenous discourses have been converted into “colonial...concepts of the state that is still governed by *criollo* [a category in the colonial *sistema de castas* referring to persons of pure Spanish origin who were born in the colonies] power using indigeneity as a disguise” (Chambi 2011: 85).

There were many issues that contribute to explanations for the suspicion and occasional hostility, the first being the fear of losing the battle for indigenous self-determination. While economic globalization and universal development agendas put pressures on indigenous lands, territories and income-generation, the simultaneous launch of multicultural reforms and the global spread of indigenous discourses opened spaces for cultural recognition and local agency (Brysk 2000; Hale 2002; Tsing 2005). Hale has argued that this “cultural project of neoliberalism” re-constitutes indigenous communities into images of the state, “inciting them to do the work of subject-formation that otherwise would fall to the state itself” (2002: 496). In a sense, neoliberal withdrawal of the state coincided with indigenous political goals of self-determination. Newly revived state interventionism has, therefore, been regarded as a disappointing course of events, because it raised fears of increasing forms of rule and control by the centralized state.

Secondly, these suspicions had a historical precedent because many indigenous activists perceived state-led schemes of development as the rebirth of the regulatory characteristics of the nation-state typical of the era of the Bolivian nationalist revolution. The nationalist revolution had enhanced a homogeneous nationalist agenda at the expense of indigenous peoples’ ethnic and cultural concerns. Common among traditional Latin American left-wing movements where there was “blindness to any identity besides class, a category derived from material relations of production” (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007: 10), the left-wing parties and unions of the time shared the homogenizing agenda of the state and despised indigenous agendas (Escobar 2008). Thirdly, such issues as the Colonization Law, state-enhanced migration of peasants to indigenous territories and other state penetration during the nationalist revolution (Postero 2007; Yashar 2005) explain some of the suspicions, doubts and hostilities held by indigenous groups: not necessarily towards the left as such but certainly towards the state – and state-centrism was associated with the MAS’ left-wingers.

Not everyone was happy with the juxtaposition of indigenous and left-wing approaches

within the executive. Fernandez explained the contradictions and power struggles between indigenous and left-wing aspirations in the following way:

Stereotypes serve a purpose in political fights...But we have to ask, what is the traditional left? Or, what indeed is indigenous thinking? We have a very, very wide gamut of both indigenous thinking and left-wing thinking [within the MAS]...I think that the current government is a combination of the richest and the most valid of indigenous thinking, as well as the richest, the most valid, and also the most viable left-wing [thinking]...The government is a confluence of these two ways of thinking...

Fernandez admitted here that the MAS presents a wide gamut of thought patterns and ideological orientations. In the practice of government, the idea of redistribution has gained significance; as Fernandez stated, “we believe that a revolution is necessary because structural changes are needed in the country; in this sense our thinking parallels traditional left-wing ideas”. Nevertheless, what made this change distinct from traditional left-wing revolutions was, according to Fernandez, that the MAS was not seeking “the destruction of the existing political order and the dictatorship of the proletariat”. As such, Fernandez’s comment is a response to a common trait among Bolivian left-wing thinkers and politicians, who, at different stages of Bolivian history have tended to prefer their own (and often unorthodox) views “to Marxism, considered ‘too cosmopolitan’ and, hence, too alien” (Morales 2003: 216). The contemporary revolution rather focused on indigenous peoples but did not represent, as Fernandez stated, “the most radical indigenous thinking that negates all Western symbols, ways of thinking, and institutional arrangements”. The ideas being drawn by the executive from indigenous activists were, according to Fernandez, linked to indigenous practices of democratic governance:

[W]e do not think that liberal democracy necessarily represents the most democratic practice ever; there are other forms of democracy deriving from indigenous traditions in which consensus, pacts, and agreements are used to gain equilibrium between people; this is where we draw ideas from indigenous thinking.

In these excerpts, Fernandez emphasizes that while the role of the state as an agent of redistribution is being strengthened in order to enhance structural changes in the political economy, indigenous self-governing practices still serve as a model for governance. But there are also different kinds of left-wing thinking among the left-wing actors of the executive as demonstrated in the following section.

### 8.2.3 Echoes from the Nationalist Revolution

One of the vice-ministers to whom I talked in an early stage of my fieldwork stated very clearly that indigenous issues were not his main priority. Working in an economic sector related to one of Bolivia's strategic resources, he rather emphasized the role of the state in economic and social affairs. Without any mention of the notion of *vivir bien* (or other indigenous terminologies), his interpretation of the state transformation process focused on changing the course of the intense processes of privatization that Bolivia had experienced during the 1980s and 1990s. Dealing with economic globalization and the functioning of free market economy was to be accomplished by increasing the regulatory role of the state, as he declared to me in an interview:

Since 1985, all productive means have practically been given to the private sector on very unfavorable conditions. Only scraps have been given to the country and most of the benefits have gone abroad. Since 2006, the new national development plan has attempted to construct a dignified and productive Bolivia by emphasizing a strong state role in productive areas. The process of nationalization has been initiated... We are promoting development through the state...

The emphasis given here by the vice-minister was on bringing back the role of the state in the promotion of development processes. The nationalization of natural resources was offered as the prime example of the shift towards state regulation of the markets. This implied that Bolivia, a former model student of World Bank and IMF-conditioned privatizations and market liberalization, was in the process of changing the course of its economic and social affairs with the state at the fore. From the point of view of plurinationalism, however, the increasing role of a central state raises questions. If one of the main goals implied in the notion of *vivir bien* has been the enhancement of indigenous self-governance of lands, territories, and their natural resources, what happens if a strong, regulatory nation-state is being advocated in the name of good life? Conflicts over forms of governing became very prevalent during our discussion. He suggested that indigenous peoples had seriously misunderstood the nature of the state transformation process.

For some reason, peasants have understood that they are proprietors of everything; if they live in some region, they think that they are owners of the land, owners of the subsoil; owners of everything. All assets are going to be recovered [from the private sector] but it is *the state* that is going to administer them; a community member cannot administer [natural resources]. Yet community members have understood it the other way around; that assets would be recovered for them. [emphasis added.]

This excerpt revealed that conflicts have emerged over the question of who is to administer the process of redistribution and the logic by which it will function. According to the

vice-minister, indigenous peoples were demanding too much when opting for self-determination within their lands and territories. In his opinion, they did not understand the increasing importance of the nation-state in decision-making processes and in the control of natural resources and territories. Rather than indigenous autonomies, he stated that the agent of redistribution is the state. Echoing discourses of the nationalist revolution, the vice-minister labeled indigenous peoples, collectively, as peasants. Eliding reference to their ethnicity or cultural difference, it became clear that he considered indigenous peoples beneficiaries of state-led modernization schemes. Related to the exploitation of natural resources in his ministerial sector, he stated that:

The whole country has been declared [a territory for exploration]. It is of the state; the state administers it; it is from this point of view that we promote development. The role of the indigenous population is to benefit from development, and to make sure they become employees, technicians; to have stable work and income. We have consultation processes with them so that they know what is being done but they do not have the right of veto.

Instead of functioning as agents of change, the role of indigenous peoples – “peasants” in his mind – was to enjoy the benefits of the redistributive policies of the state. In his view, they were merely targets of development for the interventionist state.

The case of encounters between the state and indigenous peoples at the Madidi Park which occurred during my fieldwork serves as an optimal example of this. The question of indigenous peoples in the Madidi National Park, North of La Paz, became an issue of conflict when Morales’ executive authorized the exploration and drilling of oil on indigenous lands within the park. Indigenous resistance and protests in the area were repressed and oil exploration by the state-led YPFB started. Much indigenous resistance activity spanning the late 1980s and the 1990s was directed at transnational corporations entering their lands and territories, yet the MAS executive that rose to political power through this same protest movement was now repeating the actions of transnational corporations via state enterprises. The case of Madidi Park seemed to be suggesting that national interests had become a priority at the expense of indigenous demands for territorial self-governance. Although indigenous policy ideas of good life entail principles of indigenous self-determination, the practice of government rather appeared to emphasize national concerns over indigenous interests.

This observation from the time of my fieldwork received more evidentiary support when the MAS launched its new governmental program in 2010. Entitled *Rumbo a una Bolivia Líder: 2010–2015 Programa de Gobierno*, the document is a combination of MAS’ governmental program and national development plan (Movimiento al Socialismo MAS-IPSP 2010).<sup>56</sup> While the 2006 NDP analyzed in this study was constructed around

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<sup>56</sup> The first fifty pages of the document present the achievements of the government between 2006 and 2009.

the indigenous notion of good life, the new governmental program is devoid of indigenous terminologies; it has a strong theme of modernization through state-led industrialization and other state initiatives such as infrastructure, transportation, agricultural production, and social services. Its main emphasis rests on the so-called ‘Great Industrial Leap’ (*Gran Salto Industrial*). Emphasizing the notion of *patria* (homeland), the governmental program defines Bolivia as a free, united, strong, and industrialized homeland. While there is a strong emphasis on autonomies, there emerges an even stronger emphasis on national unity and sovereignty. In many ways, the picture emerging from the document parallels James Scott’s (1998) description of high modern schemes to improve the human condition. Instead of radically democratizing forms of indigenous self-governance, the document brings us back to a nationalist, state-centered ideology with strong political leadership.

Although left-wing discourses seem to be bypassing indigenous views in the practice of government, it must be noted that numerous left-wing intellectuals and activists have been very critical about the process of change (CEDLA 2006; Orellana 2006), arguing that transformations have been very moderate. During a meeting at his office, a well-known left-wing intellectual from CEDLA drew my attention to the abyss between discursive critique of global capitalism and the practice of government:

Although there are discourses of a complete change of paradigm, there is no profound discussion about changing the patterns of capitalist accumulation in Bolivia. In practice, the government and the MAS are attempting to solve economic problems in very conventional ways. There is no questioning of the pattern of external dependency on the exportation of primary products because the government itself is fostering it. In the case of hydrocarbons, for example, while nationalization has enhanced the participation of the state in negotiations of the sector, it does not have control or leadership in the process.... The economy is managed the same way as before...

During my fieldwork, many activists in trade unions and left-wing research institutes were disappointed by the scale of nationalizations and the influence that (Latin American) transnational corporations still wielded within strategic sectors of the Bolivian economy. While Morales’ governments’ nationalizations increased the role of the state through tax returns and revenues, it did not mean closing the borders to private capital. In the case of the mining industry, for example, transnational capital from Indian, Korean,

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The rest of the document (approximately 100 pages) is entitled “Four Pillars for United and Grand Bolivia for All (National Development Plan)”. The first pillar, *Bolivia Democrática*, focuses on the consolidation of the new constitution and the Plurinational State with autonomies. *Bolivia Productiva* describes the national economic model as a mixed economy of private, state and community economies. The focus of the *Bolivia Digna* is on the redistribution of wealth and equal opportunities for all – an issue that “we used to call *vivir bien*”, states the program (Movimiento al Socialismo MAS-IPSP 2010: 54). *Bolivia Soberana* is about national identity and national sovereignty to decide over national affairs. To a large extent, discourses of good life have been replaced with references to the state and plurinationalism.

Japanese, Canadian and US companies was still prevalent despite the few isolated cases of nationalization (Webber 2011: 204). For these reasons, some left-wing critiques have used such terms as ‘neoliberal nationalization’ (Kaup 2010) to describe the contemporary situation. Although trade relations with the US, Canada and Europe have declined sharply, exports to Latin American countries, and most specifically to Brazil, have increased to two-thirds of total exports in 2008 (Webber 2011: 196). The main export markets for Bolivia’s principal export product, natural gas, are Brazil and Argentina (ibid.: 194), though during the period of my fieldwork, many perceived that Brazilian and Argentinean companies were cultivating exploitative relations similar to those that US and European transnational corporations used to have with Bolivia. Understandably, radical transformation within the global context is hard because “states are constrained by preexisting laws, the results of previous policy decisions, internal and external pressures” (Kaup 2010: 135).

### **8.3 CONTENTIOUS POLITICS OVER TERRITORIES**

Despite unifying discourses of the notion of *vivir bien* as an indigenous alternative to global development trends, earlier sections have shown that when moving from protest actions to governing, contestations emerge over how to perceive and organize the state and the economy in the framework of plurinationalism. The question of contestations touches upon redistribution. Although united under the banner of indigenous policy, the practical experience of state governance has made contestations and power struggles within social movements visible. While indigenous organizations and groups fight for their rights in the name of cultural difference and the historical experience of ‘being there first’, various other social movements within the MAS, most specifically peasant unions, opt for the redistribution of resources on the basis of other matters. In the following sections, I examine what this has meant for the practice of government. Occasionally, the state has responded to contestations with violence and force, leading to divisions within social movements and conflicts between the state and social movements, which is addressed in the last section.

Before doing that, I will focus on another aspect of plurinationalism. The process of enhancing indigenous self-determination has been confronted by lowlands elites’ aspirations for departmental autonomy. Representing large-scale landowners, agricultural export industries, and globally-oriented business sectors, the lowlands elites have not welcomed the politics of redistribution. Consequently, the process of state transformation has been hampered by their resistance, which I examine in more detail in the following.

### 8.3.1 Regional Autonomy Struggles

On a sunny November afternoon I stood in front of the parliamentary building (*Palacio de Legislación*) opposite Plaza Murillo, the busy central square of La Paz, waiting for a parliamentary assistant to pick me up for a meeting with one of the Bolivian lowlands opposition parliamentarians. Knowing the fierce resistance of Bolivia's wealthy lowlands business sectors, large-scale landowners, and the traditional political and economic elite to the political initiatives of the MAS, I was anxious to hear the views of the PODEMOS parliamentarian. The front of the parliament building was crowded with people: parliamentarians passing the doorways; journalists surrounding them for quick interviews; and indigenous crowds waiting for news on the referendum for the constitution that was being discussed in the chamber. The deputy's assistant – a young man in a smart suit – greeted me and guided us through the crowds to the doorways and through the security checks. I followed him through the shabby corridors to PODEMOS's second floor conference room which was covered with red and white campaign posters. Through the loudspeakers, I could hear the heated debates of the parliamentary session. A blond, blue-eyed male parliamentarian entered the room and sighed that he was glad to have me there so he had an excuse to escape from the quarrels of the chamber. Once seated he started to explain the battles over plurinationalism in the process of elaborating the new constitution:

[PODEMOS] was successful in introducing the Bolivian nationality [to the constitution]. The Bolivian nation-state was not there; there were solely indigenous nations, Aymara and Quechua nations. The majority of middle classes and *mestizos* were left out, although the majority of Bolivians are *mestizos* no matter what the governmental pro-indigenous propaganda preaches...

The PODEMOS deputy thus framed the opposition as the defender of the Bolivian nation-state whose unity indigenous peoples were supposedly destroying through demands for indigenous self-determination. This statement also reflected the fears and anxieties that existed within the opposition about the political demands of the MAS that could possibly endanger the position and authority of non-indigenous population. Vice-Minister Fernandez, for example, had commented that from the point of view of the traditional political and economic elite, "what are at stake are the maintenance of the status quo and the complete denial of the emergence of new patterns of thinking and governing the country through its strong indigenous component". Given the global free market ideologies and suspicions about a centralized nation-state among lowlands business elites and regional political factions, what was curious in the above extract was the defense of the Bolivian nation-state. Since the 1950s, the Bolivian lowlands had developed fairly independently at the margins of the Bolivian nation-state, whose

centralized control and influence had concentrated on the Andean mining regions. Any attempts by the state to increase its central powers have been faced with suspicion by regional elites who see the Santa Cruz area, for example, as a form of nation, while the state is merely attributed to the existence of centralized administrative powers (Seleme Antelo 2008: 170–1). However, in response to the increasing participation of indigenous peoples in state centers, the defense of the nation-state came to signify the defense of the non-indigenous sectors of the population. The PODEMOS politician went on to explain to me about their political achievements:

The second element that as an opposition we achieved were regional bonuses from the selling of hydrocarbons. The third fundamental element that we achieved is the inclusion of regional autonomies to the constitutional project. This recognition of regional autonomies has arisen from the parliament; it was not there before [in the previous versions of constitution elaborated by the Constituent Assembly and the MAS].

Here he made an explicit link between economic interests and departmental autonomies. Since the collapse of state-led mining industries in the highlands in the 1980s, the lowlands, and most specifically the area surrounding the city of Santa Cruz, has grown into Bolivia's main economic hub due to export-oriented capitalized agriculture, livestock production and hydrocarbons (Crabtree 2005: 48). One of its main assets has been its abundance of land. Since the nationalist revolution, major flows of US development aid had been directed at transforming the agrarian structure of the lowlands into export-oriented capitalist agribusiness (Moore 1990). Massive amounts of lands were granted to entrepreneurs who were in one way or another related to the governing regimes (Postero 2007; Valdivia 2010). While the MNR had drastically deprived the traditional economic elites of their properties (mining and lands) in the Andes, a new landowning and business elite was emerging in Santa Cruz. New landowning elites were given special treatment within import substitution policies. The emergence of *cruceño* economic elites as a counterbalance to the state-centered *paceño* elites was heavily supported by US via the supply of agricultural technologies, credit schemes, infrastructure, education, and health. (Moore 1990: 36–7.)

The question of land distribution worsened during the military dictatorships, when approximately 30 million hectares of land were granted to large-scale landowners in return for political support (Childress 2006: 474). Since the 1970s, lowlands economic elites, land owning bourgeoisie, and military regimes alike were also involved in drug trafficking cocaine which had a major impact on the economic development of the region (Moore 1990: 49). With the SAPs, the lowlands saw a massive expansion of transnational corporations and foreign investments in agribusiness (soya) and oil (Valdivia 2010). During the 1990s, new natural gas resources were found furthering its economic prominence and appeal for foreign investments (Postero 2007: 48). The World Bank, IMF and



IDB financed export-oriented agricultural projects augmented the land entitlements of transnational corporations and regional agribusiness at the expense of indigenous peoples living in the area (Valdivia 2010: 70–1). Even today the land distribution situation in Bolivia is extremely unequal, with 10 percent of all landowners owning approximately 90 percent of land (Childress 2006: 471).

When Morales' regime initiated the process of nationalization of hydrocarbons in 2006 and organized a referendum over land ownership in 2009, conflicts were inevitable. Both the nationalization of natural resources and the redistribution of land touched upon the sources of wealth of regional economic elites and transnational corporations. By enhancing the role of the state, the Morales' regime was perceived as attacking the foreign investments and transnational capital. After the nationalization of hydrocarbons, when the earnings doubled, elite interests and transnational concerns became framed in discourses of departmental autonomy (Morales 2012: 62). Between 2007 and 2009, there were constant conflicts, roadblocks, and violent protests between the lowlands autonomy movements and the governing regime (*ibid.*). They were promoted by the *Comité Cívico Pro Santa Cruz* (CPSC) (the most influential regional citizens' group that gathers together local elites with strands of conservative landowners and liberal business sectors), the *Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* (UJC) (a militant student group), the *Consejo Nacional Democrático* (CONALDE) (regional anti-government coalition) and business associations including the Chamber of Industries and Commerce, the Chamber of Exports, and the Federation of Private Entrepreneurs. Discourses of autonomy, however, were not new. Discourses of secession, especially in Santa Cruz, had always emerged, especially during left-wing regimes, when regional interests were in conflict with state policies. Due to the enormous economic importance of the region, central governments were forced to obey their demands. (Crabtree 2005: 51–3.) Until recently, however, claims for regional autonomy were merely symbolic; with indigenous resurgence, they were translated into political strategy (Seleme Antelo 2008: 173).

Negotiations between the MAS and lowlands authorities over the constitution in 2008, authorized later by the parliament, led to a declaration in the new constitution that states that Bolivia is territorially organized into departments, provinces, municipalities, and indigenous territories that can all be used for autonomy projects (República de Bolivia 2008a: 97). Indigenous demands for self-determination were thus complemented with increasing regional decision-making. Current landowning structures were left intact and indigenous autonomies were, in fact, subordinated to regional autonomy, because their territories cannot cross departmental borders (Regalsky 2010: 37). Social movements interpreted regional autonomy claims as an adaptation of indigenous autonomy discourses. The disappointment and anger being created by elite autonomy discourses was reflected, for example, in the following words by a peasant leader of the CSCB when speaking to me at his Miraflores office in La Paz:

In the early days our grandfathers used to live in peace and harmony. During those days [indigenous] autonomy existed; it is just that they did not have a proper concept to describe it. Now the right-wing [opposition] pretends they invented autonomy. Yet our autonomy continues to exist...

This statement reflected the idea that autonomy is perceived and framed by many indigenous activists as an ancient custom and something natural to indigenous peoples. In contrast, discourses of regional autonomy were perceived as an invention that served political and economic purposes. To some extent, the adaptation of (indigenous) discourses of autonomy showed that the political opposition had, in fact, surrendered to the reality that in contemporary Bolivia political negotiations were conducted through indigenous terminologies.

### 8.3.2 The Land Question among Social Movements

Despite their apparent unification behind the MAS, it has become increasingly clear that social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions are internally divided. Van Cott (2008: 57) has correctly noted that the rapid rise of the MAS to political power threatens its internal cohesion and identity. Major differences seem to occur organizationally between indigenous organizations (CONAMAQ, CIDOB) and peasant unions (CSUTCB, CSCB and Bartolinas Sisas), and regionally between highlands and lowlands movements. Even the definition of indigenous peoples as *indígenas-originarios-campesinos* reflects the multiple understandings of who are being considered indigenous peoples in Bolivia. The head of indigenous affairs at the Ministry of the Interior with whom I had a long discussion on the relationships between indigenous organizations and peasant unions told me that although all these groups have been united and merged (*se mezcla todo*), differences do exist:

Some say that peasants are not indigenous. Peasants themselves say that they are not indigenous. Where do peasants come from? Aren't they the Aymara and the Quechua? They are called peasants solely because of the 1952 revolution. President Evo Morales, for example, is a coca-growing peasant, but he continues to be indigenous as well. The fathers and grandfathers of peasants are indigenous. Others say that I am not indigenous; why are you labeling me indigenous, a term related to colonization? I am *originario*. This is what the members of the CONAMAQ, for example, say. Indigenous peoples are considered to be the smallest minority groups [in the lowlands], while those in *ayullus* are *originarios*. In the end, all these groups have now been united and the new constitution recognizes *indígenas-originarios-campesinos* as one category.

Differences – and conflicts – between peasant unions and indigenous organizations and between highlands and lowlands regions, reconciled by the MAS' rise to political power,

have long historical roots in the era of the Bolivian nationalist revolution. As already explained, the nationalist revolution supported the organization of rural indigenous peoples into peasant unions. During military dictatorships, they were co-opted into governing mechanisms through corporatist measures, with the promise of the continuation of land reform and universal education that had been particularly beneficial to highlands Aymara and Quechua groups. The 1953 land reform that distributed ex-hacienda lands to peasants in the highlands was, however, never implemented among the lowlands peoples (Crabtree 2005: 56). Additionally, the colonization programs that were implemented between 1958 and 1985 awarded between 3 to 5 million hectares of land north of Santa Cruz, in Chapare, and Beni to migrants from the highlands (Childress 2006: 474).

Lowland indigenous peoples had high hopes for the 1996 land reform which was highly criticized among the highland groups as a neoliberal privatization scheme. Through the land titling, lowlands indigenous groups succeeded in obtaining recognition of their territories and collective ownership of lands through the TCOs, while peasant groups were less successful in this (Crabtree 2005: 56–7). They rather organized themselves through municipal OTBs and major conflicts of interest emerged between TCOs and OTBs (Albó 2008: 54). The 1953 Agrarian Law had stated that peasants could occupy lands that were not in productive use and that they could make legal claims on them to land reform authorities. With the support of IFIs, the 1996 INRA reform changed this by seeking private property rights, which made the land-use of many small-scale peasants illegal. Indigenous groups, for their part, were able to claim lands and territories collectively in the name of indigeneity. (Crabtree 2005: 56–7.)

Through multicultural reforms and international conventions, indigenous identity had therefore become an important signifier in the allocation of resources such as lands and territories. Two culturally based indigenous organizations, CONAMAQ and CIDOB, formed close relationships of cooperation and dialogue with both national and regional governments, as well as foreign donor agencies. To give an example: in 1994, the CIDOB signed an agreement with the MNR-led Subsecretariat of Ethnic Affairs to work on policies and legislations (Postero 2007: 52). The CONAMAQ was also willing to cooperate with the government and prior to the Gas War, for example, its leaders were identified with supporting the conservative, right-wing government of ex-military dictator Banzer (Albó 2005: 66). The above-mentioned head of indigenous affairs commented on this issue to me:

International cooperation solely worked with the theme of indigeneity. They did not work with peasants because they thought that as a result of the revolution peasants had lost their indigenous philosophies. So, they started to work solely with Ayoreos, Chiquitanos, Guaraníes and others that were still considered to maintain their indigenous ideas intact. This discussion was a major dispute and it continues even today.

Drawing on Charles Hale's notion of 'authorized Indians', Albó (2008: 56) situates identity-based indigenous organizations, supported by anthropologists, NGOs, and international aid agencies, within the category of *indios permitidos*, while peasant unions have historically represented out-of-control Indians (*indios alzados*) who were perceived as rebellious, radical, and violent.<sup>57</sup> Hale (2002) suggests that those indigenous peoples that successfully integrate themselves into global capitalism through NGOs and grassroots organizations are being rewarded by cultural recognition and transnational financial flows, while conflictive indigenous masses that demand structural changes to neoliberal governance are condemned. In this situation, as we have seen earlier, peasant unions started increasingly to use indigenous terminologies in the promotion of their political goals. Until the early 1990s, however, CSCB's discourse, for example, had been completely oriented towards modernization schemes and union activism with no traces of indigenous discourses (Albó 2008: 62).<sup>58</sup> In relation to the contemporary process of state transformation through indigenous ideas, the head of indigenous affairs commented that:

In the contemporary process of change, peasants say that although they may have lost some indigenous traits, some of them are also maintained. Convention 169 states that indigenous ideas and institutions have to be preserved totally or partially. They say that although our ideas are more ideological and left-wing, we, nonetheless, maintain some indigenous ideas and, therefore, we are indigenous.

When we start to look at contemporary factions within the MAS, it is important to note that Morales and his main followers derive from peasant union traditions. This concern was expressed in the words of an indigenous leader from one of the lowlands member organizations of CIDOB whom I met in La Paz when discussing both regional differences and differences in economic interests:

When Evo Morales and his government were appointed in Tiwanaku [ruins of an ancient indigenous civilization in the Andean mountains, where the president held a traditional indigenous ritual of appointment after his election], it was very exciting for lowlands indigenous peoples, because he calls himself *indigena*. But, in the end, he mainly represents the highlands Quechua and Aymara...

And he continued with what, in his opinion, was really at stake:

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57 According to Whitten and Whitten, the term *alzamiento indio* refers to "actions of people out of place, lacking consciousness, and acting in an unruly manner". They note that the Spanish term *alzados* can solely be used to describe and categorize black people, indigenous people, or animals, but not whites. (2011: 76).

58 About the use of indigenous identity for enhancing peasant claims in the Andes, see Yashar (2005: 182). For a parallel process in Chiapas, Mexico, see Tsing (2007: 47).

We have historical demands for lands, but currently in this process [of state transformation] we do not agree with peasant unions, because they have another kind of ideology, another way of thinking than we have. As *indigenas* we have a very distinct ideology. A year ago we were having problems in the north of La Paz, because [the government] wanted to make us indigenous peoples disappear from there; they wanted to make the Madidi natural park where we live disappear. The *dirigentes* [leaders] of peasants and colonizers are interested in money and [government's] projects, and we aren't...

Here he referred to the case of Madidi Park that I discussed earlier and criticized the fact that peasant unions had supported the plan of the governing regime to extract oil from indigenous lands in the name of the state oil company. This remark reflected wider contradictions between the discourses and practices of the governing regime. “At the same time that Morales speaks about anticapitalist ecological politics”, Webber notes, “his... policies reinforce a complex and reconstituted neoliberalism, based on the export of primary raw materials, such as hydrocarbons...” (2011: 234). Indigenous activist also complained that peasant unions were interested in state-led development paradigms, while indigenous peoples in the area rather wanted to use and control their lands and territories in a sovereign way without state intervention. During my fieldwork, the peasant response to this criticism was that identity-based movements, and especially lowlands *indigenas*, had been pampered by aid agencies, NGOs, and neoliberal governments since the 1990s, as reflected, for example, in their collective land rights, while small-scale rural colonizers and peasants had been left in an unfavorable position. In fact, while some of the 500,000 people living in the colonization areas do economically well, the large majority of them live in extreme poverty (Childress 2006: 474). This was reflected in the aggravated comments of a peasant leader from one of the peasant organizations at the core of the MAS:

We are gradually shifting from bourgeois *latifundios* to indigenous *latifundios*. This is where those [indigenous persons] who manage the theme of lands are demonstrating their biases... We [peasants] want the land to be redistributed in an even and equal way without preferences to anyone, because we are all *originarios* in Bolivia. The Amazonian *indigenas* are already privileged to have more extensions of land than others. For example, in the north of La Paz a few hundred indigenous peoples have around a half a million hectares of land, while by its side there is a settlement living on barely fifty hectares of land...

From these interviews, it became evident that the question of indigenous ideas is also a question of political and economic resources over which battles are fought. Indigenous organizations tend to promote collective landownership and indigenous territorial self-governance, while peasant unions are more prone to supporting state-led schemes of redistribution of resources. In the process of constructing the plurinational state, this leads to two distinct paths: one where culturalist organizations such as CONAMAQ and

CIDOB promote the construction of self-governing indigenous nations through cultural discourses of indigenous beliefs, and another where peasant unions such as the CSUTCB opt for state-led schemes of improvement. In concrete practice, of course, the question is more complicated as Postero, for example, has noted: “Over the last hundred years, [lowlands] Guaranís have held their lands both ways, collectively and individually...made rational calculations about land values and subsistence farming and sold their farm lands” (2010: 405). Yet the portrayal of indigeneity has become an important issue because no one has so much at stake in the process of state transformation as earlier marginalized populations that are interested in the redistribution of resources.

This resembles the case of Indonesia studied by Li (2000) where the constitution recognizes land rights based upon *adat*, or custom, leading to impoverished rural populations fighting over the definition of who is indigenous and, thereby, entitled to land rights, and who is not. Rather than serving as a device of articulation, Li concludes that the notion of indigenous knowledge has functioned as a category of indigenous purity and, thereby, a category of separation between indigenous peoples and peasants. Niezen has commented that “within the indigenous nation itself it is mostly blood and place of parentage that determine who belongs and who does not” (2003: 13). It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the observation that Sharma and Gupta (2006b: 30) have made concerning the linkages between nation-state, territories, sovereignty, and culture. While they recognize the occasional capacity of indigenous movements to successfully obtain sovereign statehood, they warn of the danger of naturalizing and reinforcing the idea that specific statehood, territory and sovereignty match a specific culture – the same ideological concurrence occurring in nation-state formation (ibid.). In the practice of the state, this may serve to posit boundaries between and within political subjects implicated in the process of state transformation.

### **8.3.3 The Return of Contentious Politics**

In the practice of the state, contestations over diverging governmental schemes of improvement have led to the escalation of conflicts. One major conflict over the course of the state transformation process that aptly exemplifies diverging views has been the case involving the Isiboro Securé National Park and Indigenous Territory (*Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé, TIPNIS*) (for a profound analysis, see McNeish 2013), that occurred after my fieldwork. Commencing in August 2010, the TIPNIS situation resembles that of Madidi Park, though more aggravated and conflictive, with a long historical record of contentious relationships between migrant colonizers and lowlands indigenous groups, and mobilizations against the state and colonizers in the name of indigeneity (Postero 2007; Yashar 2005). At the centre of the conflict lie the

plans of Morales' executive to construct a highway between the towns of Cochabamba and Trinidad in the department of Beni through the TIPNIS-protected natural park and lowlands indigenous territories. From the point of view of the Morales' executive, the justification for this plan was that road building would unite the Andean and Amazonian regions that have, historically, been largely unconnected. This would facilitate economic opportunities and the provision of social services for these areas. Yet many indigenous groups living in TIPNIS furiously resisted the project. They argued that the road would only open up economic opportunities for coca-growing colonizers, Morales' principal political support basis. Additionally, better infrastructure would open up lowlands indigenous territories for Aymara and Quechua migrants and *colonizadores*, which would further enhance conflicts over lands and territories. Furthermore, natural gas has been found to the west of the park territory, and contracts have been granted to the state-led Bolivian-Venezuelan company, Petro-Andina (YPFB-PDVSA) (McNeish 2013: 225).

In contrast with ideals of indigenous self-determination of lands and territories implicit in the notion of *suma qamaña*, this initiative rather highlights the focus of the new 2010 governmental policy through large-scale development projects such as road building and resource extraction (República de Bolivia 2010). It brings up inconsistencies and contradictions between anti-imperialist discursive commitment to the indigenous cause and environmental protection, and the real-life exploitative practices of the state against its people (Webber 2011: 235). In this sense, it resembles similar contradictions that have emerged in Ecuador between the constitutional notions of *sumak kawsay* and the state-led oil extraction (see, for example, Bernal 2013).

A major conflict between the Morales' executive and lowlands indigenous groups developed. The aggressive intervention of the state into indigenous territories also attracted the increasing attention of indigenous and environmental activists worldwide. Indigenous groups at the TIPNIS, together with their main organization CIDOB, actively framed their resistance using global indigenous discourses and mobilized international NGOs to campaign against the Morales' executive. They also initiated a massive march (*VII Marcha Indígena por la Tierra y Territorio*) towards the capital La Paz in August 2011; this replicated the actions of indigenous peoples from the same region in 1990 (Postero 2007; Yashar 2005). Their march was supported by the CONAMAQ, while pro-MAS peasant unions resisted it, claiming that lowlands indigenous groups and communities had linkages to right-wing political opposition. Violent conflicts and repression by the police and army occurred when peasant unions and the governing regime confronted indigenous marchers, which resembled the workers' strikes over minimum wages and salary rates organized by the COB that the CSUTCB, FNMCB-BS and CSCB – the peasant allies of the governing regime – opposed. While at times the COB and teacher strikers were accused of being ultra-Trotskyites, the government also claimed that the mobilizations were channeling the attempts by the right-wing opposition and US imperialism to shatter

the governing regime. The conflict showed “the ideological and political aggressiveness with which the Morales government is prepared to encounter popular sectors” (Webber 2011: 217).

The TIPNIS conflict reflected internal conflicts and diverging interests between indigenous groups (McNeish 2013). As a result of these conflicts, it has been reported that the Unity Pact of social movements has split up because indigenous culturalist organizations such as the CONAMAQ and the CIDOB disagree with the main peasant unions that have continued to support the actions of the executive (Bolpress 2011). While social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions had formed a united front to support the rise of the MAS to political power, historical differences between them, and respective quarrels and conflicts re-emerged; they had once again become internally fragmented. It has been claimed that the Unity Pact functions through *oficialista* peasant unions and some individual members of the CONAMAQ and the CIDOB that are closely aligned to – or have been co-opted by – the Morales’ executive (Regalsky 2010). Drawing on Bolivia’s long experience with the co-governing arrangements, state influence has been expanded alongside – and over – indigenous claims.

The conflict has shown that the executive has a growing interest in extending its control over national territory and natural resources – and social and indigenous movements located in those areas – through large-scale development projects. Nevertheless, state-led development interventions do not solely discipline; sovereign authority that is maintained through the use and control of violence is also channeled through them. As the cases of Madidi Park and the TIPNIS have demonstrated, the practice of government through indigenous ideas has clashed with the outright violence and repression of indigenous groups by the state. If the government gains legitimacy through the positive enhancement of people’s lives, bureaucratic discipline and the use of violence and repression represent negative forms of rule (Li 2007). By endorsing violence, repression, and centralization of state power, the governing regime, though it purports to be committed to the principle of good life, is giving rise to contradictions between various forms of rule.

The TIPNIS conflict has shown once again that the notion of *vivir bien* has failed to become the practice of government. One may well ask whether indigenous peoples are perceived rather as disciplined masses than as governing pluralities. On the other hand, the re-emergence of contentious politics has shown that the practice of politics as a critical challenge to the repressive forms of rule is constantly present – even within, and against, governing social movements.



## 8.4 CONCLUSIONS

While neoliberal governmentality shifted attention from class-based conflicts over redistribution of resources to struggles for recognition on the basis of cultural difference (Fraser 1997; Hale 2002), the contemporary Bolivian state transformation process has brought the question of redistribution back to the fore. Two alternatives have arisen: first, the increasing presence of the Bolivian nation-state in economic and social affairs; and second, the increasing self-determination of indigenous nations. Movement scholars, indigenous activists, and those influenced by the historical experiences of the 1952 nationalist revolution have diverging views on the issue of sovereignty. Contradictions arise between the democratizing principle of plurinationalism according to which autonomous indigenous territories, municipalities, and regions are to be self-governed by plural political formations – or what I call governing pluralities – and the centralizing tendencies of the state reinforced by issues such as resource extraction, projects of infrastructure, and, most importantly, the silencing of critical voices.

Consequently, this chapter has witnessed the development of a stronger role for the Bolivian nation-state and a gradual withering away, if not a total disappearance, of such indigenous terminologies as *vivir bien*. The issue of indigenous self-determination has stagnated in external and internal conflicts and contestations and the whole process of change has started to crumble. The adaptation of autonomy discourses by regional elites is a counterforce to the process of constructing the Plurinational State of indigenous nations: it is an attempt to retain economic and political privileges in the hands of those who enjoy the benefits of neoliberal governmentality. Conflicts that have erupted between the MAS' government and indigenous movements, as well as among social movements themselves, show that unifying the very diverse Bolivian social and indigenous movements under a common policy denominator appears to be an ideal rather than a practice. Contestations and power struggles are evident in the continuous negotiations over the construction of a unifying state discourse based on indigenous ideas, and the real-life fragmentation of political and economic interests among indigenous organizations and peasant unions. However, the flame of critical movement politics is alive in the protest actions of indigenous movements that have confronted the state.

## **PART IV: CONCLUDING REMARKS**



## 9 CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the politics of indigeneity in the Bolivian state transformation process. By following the notion of *vivir bien* through policy analysis, participant-observation, and interviewing, I have shed light on multiple contestations and power struggles that have developed in the elaboration of an endogenous policy concept and political alternative that draws on multiple ideas of indigeneity. In choosing to examine both its discursive construction and its translation into bureaucratic practice through a multidisciplinary gaze, I have contributed to an increasing scholarship on such decolonial alternatives as the notion of *vivir bien*. I have portrayed the notion as a locally grounded alternative and as a form of national resistance to the hegemony of Western development paradigms, through which neocolonial relations and dependencies inherent in the capitalist global order have been constructed, maintained, and reinforced. Yet while policy may appear as a form of imperialism, my study argues that it may be more than that: it is a contingent way to govern; an assemblage that articulates various forms of power and governance. Therefore, I have aimed at making the case for the utility of combining political economy with views from postcolonial critique and postmodern Foucauldian approaches.

Below I present the results and the significance of the research. The following section will focus on describing and explaining the empirical results of the ethnographic analysis with regards the research questions. The latter parts will explicate the methodological, theoretical, and normative significance of the study. Further areas of scholarship will also be discussed.

### 9.1 IN THE NAME OF GOOD LIFE

In the most concrete sense, this study has examined what has been said and done in the name of good life in the arenas of Bolivian policy making and state transformation. The first empirical research question asked how the notion of *vivir bien* has been conceptually and discursively constructed into state policy; the second looked at how indigenous policy has been translated into bureaucratic practice; while the third, relevant to issues raised in the first two, asked what kind of contestations and power relations have emerged both in the discursive construction and bureaucratic practice of the notion of *vivir bien* as state policy.

In Chapter Four I traced the origins of contemporary policy discourses to indigenous terminologies, such as the Aymara notion of *suma qamaña*, circulating among indigenous

activists, intellectuals, and organizations. My main argument here was that through the promotion of indigenous cultural difference via such notions as *suma qamaña*, major political goals are promoted. With the increasing threat of neoliberal globalization and the emergence of multicultural policy reforms since the 1990s, such indigenous notions as *suma qamaña* were conceptually and discursively constructed especially among highlands Aymara scholars as a conglomeration of indigenous worldviews, ideas, and practices that together legitimize political struggles for indigenous self-determination: an age-old political goal for many indigenous groups. Consequently, I have argued that the notion of *suma qamaña* as cultural difference is crucial in enhancing a phenomenon that I call governing pluralities. To govern in the name of good life, therefore, signifies governing through plural political formations. At the sphere of contemporary state policy, this idea of indigenous sovereignty has been inscribed in the construction of the Plurinational State whereby the state is framed as a conglomeration of indigenous nations, autonomous regions, and so forth. Therefore, to govern the state in the name of good life implies a major transformation for the presumably unified, coherent, and mono-cultural Bolivian nation-state. Ideally, it makes indigenous peoples the subjects of their own development. Ultimately, I argued that in Bolivia, the state, indeed, is a crucial reference point for indigenous peoples, yet the politics of indigenous ideas implies a radically altered understanding of the state both as an object and an instrument of change. The state that matters is radically altered in its form, representation, and agency, one that in its heightened sense of appreciation for pluralism implies a democratizing potential for Bolivia's indigenous majority.

In Chapter Five I looked at the discursive construction of the notion of *vivir bien* into state policy. The policy framework, most visible in the National Development Plan, was described and analyzed as a new form of government. By doing this, I placed the analysis of policy into the Foucauldian framework through the portrayal of government as a calculated means of governing individuals and groups of people by doing good. This idea of improvement of people's lives – the fundamental way to legitimize the overwhelming global influence of development policy and practice – thereby differed from the understanding of power as, for example, disciplinary control or authoritarian rule. Yet rather than discussing how this power operates at local levels as exercised on the so-called objects of development (for example, indigenous peoples), my empirical case turned the gaze upside down. I followed the previously marginalized social movements, indigenous organizations, and peasant unions as they entered a governing role, where they had become the new planners, executors, and negotiators of governmental strategies and policies in a situation of major paradigm shift.

My analysis of the notion of good life as policy discourse turned the gaze traditionally exercised by ethnographers upside down in another sense as well. While most ethnographies that discuss aid apparatus, such as Ferguson (1994), Ferguson and Gupta (2002), Green

(2010), Hale (2002), and Li (2007), have examined forms and effects of neoliberal governmentality, my empirical case rather focused on state policy that explicitly aims at challenging neoliberal policies and state practices. In contemporary Bolivian context, as I showed, the main unifying characteristic of the new policy framework was the belief that rather than having improved the lives of people, development principles, models, and actors brought from abroad and functioning from above had caused damage. Therefore, as I indicated, the notion of *vivir bien* served as a unifying term to make development more endogenous and less dependent on outsiders through the indigenization of policy. Crystallized in the NDP term neoliberal colonialism, and sharing the views of Blaser (2007) and Escobar (2010a), I identified the critique of neoliberal globalization and the coloniality of knowledge and epistemologies as two major issues that had inspired the construction of the notion of *vivir bien* as an alternative policy principle. In respect to the former, by aiming to eliminate development conditionalities, to recover national decision making over development policy, and to strengthen the role of the state in social and economic affairs, the NDP emphasizes the abolishment of external dependencies and the enhancing of the sovereignty of the Bolivian state *vis-à-vis* IFIs, development agencies and transnational corporations. In respect to the latter, and in accordance to many Latin American postcolonial scholars (Escobar 2010a; Mignolo and Escobar eds. 2010; Moraña et al. eds. 2008; Quijano 2005), I indicated that the NDP portrays the notion of *vivir bien* as decolonial policy option based on alternative forms of knowledge and indigenous epistemologies.

However, my analysis of policy discourses and indigenous intellectual and movement discourses has showed that within the discursive construction of the notion of good life, there are already contradictions and contestations. Although in accordance with recent studies that have shown that major changes have not been achieved (Molero and Paz 2012; Postero 2013; Webber 2011), my study did not focus on asking whether change has been achieved but rather on how it is produced, or not, in the words and actions of the people that are supposed to make policies work. Instead of claiming that governmental strategies and policies have become self-referential points of closure as critical scholars of policy such as Rose (1996) and Shore and Wright (1997) have done, my ethnographic analysis rather draws attention to political contestations and power struggles within its definition and practice. In the practice of government, as I have argued, this heterogeneity of views has turned into a battlefield over differing schemes of improvement, or social change.

I started analysis of the translation of indigenous policy into practice in Chapter Six by defining the practice of government along the lines of Li (2007) who has stated that two issues are crucial: first, the identification of a problem that needs to be corrected and, secondly, the establishment of technical expertise that effectively does that. By examining the views and work of public servants, consultants, ministers, and indigenous scholars at policy events, I encountered various challenges in rendering indigenous policy ideas



technical. Ethnographic studies of aid have shown that neoliberal development policies and solutions tend to stick to technical issues and neglect political questions related to matters such as the redistribution of resources and the questioning of global and national power inequalities (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002); in contemporary Bolivia, however, the opposite has occurred. Although my ethnographic examples demonstrated that there have been many attempts to formulate technical planning, monitoring, and evaluation systems, they also showed that the technicality of things interfered with the conceptual and discursive construction of the notion of *vivir bien*. The question of messy politics, therefore, arose in the translation of indigenous ideas into technical expertise.

I concluded that glitches in problematization and in rendering technical have led to a situation in which the notion of good life has not been effectively translated into new, radically democratizing forms of governmental practice. I have demonstrated that despite efforts to the contrary, bureaucratic practices continue to function in many similar ways as they did before the emergence of indigenous policy alternatives. As Escobar (1995) and many other development critics after him have shown, global development discourses are so powerful that it has become nearly impossible to think outside their parameters. Although the shift in Bolivian policy discourses represents a critical challenge to neoliberal development paradigms, I argued that the practices of public servants and consultants represent a struggle between indigenous policy alternative and bureaucratic traditions cemented in their everyday actions in an era of neoliberal reforms. Decades of neoliberal policy models that shape the practices, routines, and behavior of people in a certain way are not easy to change. Consequently, I argued that the more the coloniality of the state reproduces itself, the less power is channeled through new forms of 'decolonial government' (or improvement in the name of good life) and the more through other (less positive) forms of power.

In Chapter Seven I started to tackle this concern by looking more closely at the effects on the practice of government of the institutional and structural characteristics of the Bolivian state bureaucracy. First, I explored the role of public servants within state ministries and institutions and concluded that their interest in translating indigenous policy ideas into bureaucratic practice varied from compliance in order to maintain employment, to quiet resistance visible in the continuation of old bureaucratic practices, to outright rejection on the basis of ethnic and racial prejudices. It was, as I indicated, in the interests of many public servants to continue with neoliberal state practices. Second, I examined the role of social movements within state institutions and structures through the analysis of corporatist patterns, patron-client networks, and personalization of politics. Although the institutionalization of social movements enhances movement participation in state affairs, I argued that co-governing arrangements may also function to discipline and control them. This, as I have shown, has historical roots in the Bolivian nationalist revolution and military dictatorships that enforced state-led development planning,

and in the long colonial and postcolonial history of the centralization of power in the executive and other authorities.

As a result, I concluded that the Bolivian state bureaucracy seems to be a disciplinary power that challenges the translation of democratizing, decolonizing, and decentralizing indigenous policy ideas into practices of the state. This new indigenous development paradigm clashes not only with neoliberal traditions and practices but also with the newly arisen role of state-led development schemes. Therefore, alongside the radically democratizing idea of governing pluralities, there are concurrent bureaucratic efforts that aim to control indigenous peoples and social movements as objects rather than subjects of change. Government as a form of power that is produced and circulating through schemes of improvement such as policy is therefore challenged by other forms of rule; namely, discipline as a bureaucratic exercise and sovereign authority via the personalization of political power. There are continual battles, as I indicated, between different forms of power and rule.

In Chapter Eight I argued that contestations over differing governmental improvement schemes are closely linked to the question of redistribution of resources within the Plurinational State; an issue that is crucial for social change and very much needed in such unequal societies as Bolivia. The contemporary Bolivian state transformation process has brought back the question of redistribution. This, as I indicated, has led to disputes within the executive, between the executive and the political opposition, and within social movements. I showed that there is continual confrontation within the executive and within social movements over new, decolonial indigenous policy alternatives and centralizing state-led schemes. This has led to fragmentation between peasant unions and indigenous organizations, and highlands and lowlands movements. Conflicts have deepened when the executive and movements aligned to it have responded to indigenous resistance and to the emergence of new forms of contentious politics with violence and repression. I interpreted this as a sign of increasing forms of sovereign authority through which the popular masses are disciplined and controlled by coercive means.

I showed that governmental strategies and practices are also negotiated with, and confronted by, the political opposition. The adaptation of autonomy discourses by regional elites is a counterforce to the process of constructing the Plurinational State of indigenous nations. Contestations and power struggles are evident in ongoing negotiations over the construction of a unifying state discourse and the real-life fragmentation of political and economic interests among various kinds of actors. I concluded that disputes regarding such notions as *vivir bien* become a field of power in which a diversity of agendas over meanings and resources meet; resulting clashes are inevitable because both the elites and previously marginalized sections of the Bolivian people have much to lose and much to win.

## 9.2 TOWARD AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF DECOLONIAL GOVERNMENT

Anthropological accounts of indigenous peoples have traditionally studied them either in local or global arenas, whereas the study of states, where indigenous peoples have often had little or no presence, has traditionally been in the hands of political scientists. Through the empirical case of contemporary Bolivia, I have shown that, in today's world, national forums are also relevant for understanding indigenous experience. In this, I coincide with Tsing (2007) and Yashar (2005). Following the ideas of ethnographers of the state such as Sharma and Gupta (2006b) and Trouillot (2003), I have researched indigenous peoples who have taken on influential roles in state governance. In doing this, the traditional ethnographic method of participant-observation was put to the test: how can an ethnographer grasp state bureaucracy and policy-making processes ethnographically? This challenge relates largely to the issue of how to observe those involved, and how to participate in their activities on a daily basis. Yet, I believe, we have to be brave enough to experiment with new forms of doing ethnography, thereby validating the ethnographic approach in the examination of contemporary phenomena. Instead of examining specific groups of people in a specific place, I opted, therefore, for the analysis of the functioning of the state in a process of transformation through a specific policy discourse: the notion of *vivir bien*.

As a result, the methodological significance of this study resides in my response to the two methodological research questions that I posed. First, I asked how to grasp ethnographically the bureaucratic context in which new indigenous policy ideas start to circulate, by following the notion of *vivir bien*. My main source of inspiration was Li's (2007) methodological contribution to the formation of ethnography of government that combines the study of governmental rationalities with the examination of contentious politics. In the extremely politically volatile context of contemporary Bolivia, I found this approach useful when examining how the current Bolivian governing regime aims to translate its radical political discourses into governmental strategies and practices. In the process of shifting from protests to proposals, from politics to technical solutions, new forms of politics as contestation have appeared at the crossroads between diverging forms of governmental schemes of improvement and various forms of power. While it seems that the end result is a complex web of contestations, this is what makes this approach valid. In fact, Li has noted that "engaging with the 'messy actualities' of rule in practice is not merely an adjunct to the study of government – it is intrinsic to it" (2007: 283). It is exactly the complexity and messiness of ethnographic examination that allows us to go beyond the simplified dichotomies against which I have argued in this study.

Yet in comparison to many ethnographers of aid, I shifted the focus from the study of how forms of governance work at grassroots levels to the examination of how they are



constructed and negotiated at the centers of the state by people who have traditionally been marginalized from decision- and policy-making processes. Thus, I applied the ethnography of government approach to the case in which previously marginalized groups of people have become the creators, negotiators, and implementing agents of governmental policies through decolonial indigenous ideas. As a challenge to neoliberal policies, such as SAPs and PRSPs, I suggested that *vivir bien* policy functions as a sort of 'decolonial government'. By doing this, I extended Li's (2007) concept of government to respond to indigenous epistemologies and decolonial policy alternatives studied by such scholars of postcolonial critique as Escobar (2010a), Mignolo and Escobar (2010), Moraña et al. (2008), and Quijano (2005). With the notion of decolonial government I refer to forms of governing and controlling individuals and groups through indigenous principles that emphasize cultural difference and indigenous self-governance through pluralities. However, decolonial government also implies the abolition of neocolonial relations and an attempt to intervene in the overwhelming commodification of our lives at all levels. Through an ethnographic examination of decolonial state politics I was able to make Latin American postcolonial critique more empirically grounded. An ethnographic account provides us with the analysis of how decolonial discourses, such as indigenous notion of *vivir bien*, function in concrete political arenas.

With the notion of decolonial government, I responded to the second methodological research question that I had: that is, what are the comparative advantages of ethnographic methodology in the study of state formation and global processes? It is my argument that through a multidisciplinary approach it is possible to grasp those political alternatives present in the Global South that do not easily fit with Western scholarly and ideological paradigms. Through ethnography, the examination of anti-capitalist alternatives does not remain at the level of abstractions or ideals but shows the complexities, difficulties, and struggles that people face in their everyday lives when they try to make change a reality. As a critical discipline, development studies needs to examine political alternatives to the global capitalist political economy. In order to become viable options, these alternatives have to work and be meaningful in the lives of people: by bringing their voices to the fore, an ethnographic approach illustrates whether this is the case or not. Consequently, a qualitative ethnographic engagement may, to an extent, also urge forward the 'decolonization' of scholarly examination of state formation and global processes by means of elements such as long-term residence with the people one studies; moreover, I believe that reflexivity on one's own positionality encourages local people's own perceptions to play a more crucial role in the research than researcher's presuppositions.

In the future, research on decolonial government would need to shift the analysis that I have made at the level of the state to specific local contexts. This idea has linkages with the theoretical need to examine not only external but also internal forms of governmentality: subject-formation at local levels. One should ask how to grasp

methodologically the analysis of changing forms of self-discipline at grassroots levels in situations when governmental strategies and practices change. On the other hand, having studied ethnographically how policy shift works on the aid-recipient side of the coin, I have become aware of the need to extend this same approach to the side of aid donors as well. This study has not given much attention to aid donors due to the process of indigenization of policy in this specific empirical case; an interesting topic for future research would, therefore, be to examine how governmental schemes of improvement work in aid relations in situations when discourses of development drastically change on the part of aid donor(s). Therefore, in terms of further contributing to the methodological development of ethnography of government, there are two options for future research endeavors: to extend the analysis of Bolivian national scales to local scales or to shift from national locales to transnational arenas.

### **9.3 DIVERGING GOVERNMENTAL SCHEMES OF IMPROVEMENT**

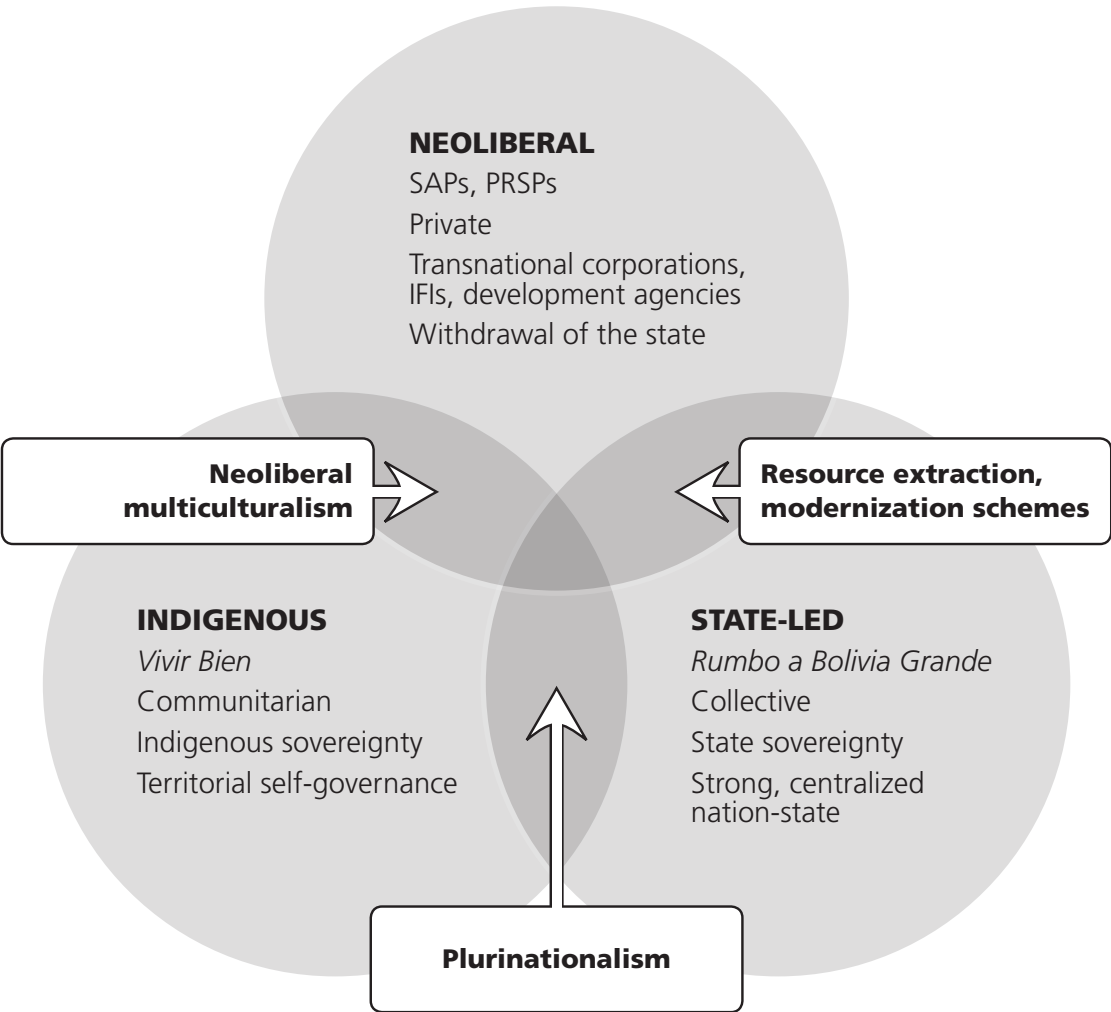
Drawing on Li's (2007) ethnographic analysis of the logics of improvement as a form of exercising power through policy, I portrayed how neoliberal governmentality works through transnational development encounters. Scholars such as Fraser (2003) have argued that the transnationalization and de-territorialization of the world have challenged and put into question a Foucauldian understanding of governmentality that was constructed on the basis of the analysis of European nation-states (see Foucault 1991). Sharing the views of many ethnographers of aid (Ferguson 1994; Ferguson and Gupta 2005; Green 2010; Hale 2002; Li 2007), however, my starting point was that international development aid has functioned as a strong governmentality-producing mechanism especially since the increasing spread of global free market principles and universal development paradigms. The idea was that discussion of governmentality in an age of economic globalization and universal development paradigms "offers a lens to understand how power is exercised in society through varied social relations, institutions, and 'bodies' that do not automatically fit under the rubric of 'the state'" (Sharma and Gupta 2006b: 25). The role of such global institutions as IFIs and development agencies, as well as local NGOs, communities, and so forth, has become paramount in this process (ibid.).

My study examined how forms of power and rule operate when locally-grounded policy initiatives challenge universally applicable development models and paradigms exemplified in such policy frameworks as SAPs and PRSPs which are widely applied in the poorest countries of the Global South. In recent years, the intensification of global flows of ideas, practices, people, and capital, has generated a counter-process, some sort of 're-nationalization' where demands for an increasing role for the nation-state, sovereignty,

people's power, and the regulation of global markets have gained new discursive power in political fights. This has not occurred solely in Bolivia. In many parts of the world, the employment of culture and tradition as symbols of national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* foreign actors, influences, and processes has become increasingly common. In many parts of contemporary Africa, universal human rights are resisted on the basis of their being foreign to "African culture". Anti-immigration movements and political parties in many European countries have, for their part, emphasized the revival of "national cultures and traditions" as opposed to foreign influences. In Latin America, the emergence of indigenous cultural ideas as political alternatives has taken a predominantly anti-capitalist stance amidst the wider regional struggle to combat economic dependencies and massive inequalities. Whatever shape and form it takes, the production of discourses and practices of social change in the name of culture is increasingly prevalent, promoting both questions of resource struggles and identity concerns. Bolivia offers a prime example of this tendency.

Studying how the transnational character of governmentality is resisted in a specific empirical context, my research has indicated that the notion of *vivir bien* as state policy functions as a tool through which claims of national sovereignty and indigenous self-determination are portrayed and promoted in various, yet often conflicting, ways. This is where I developed the concept of governing pluralities to define the ideal behind contemporary policy operations and indigenous terminologies. This idea of the 'governed becoming governors' is visible both in indigenous struggles for self-determination, and in state policy discourses opting towards the creation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. As such, it implies a major democratizing potential for previously marginalized groups of people. As already noted, the translation of policy ideas into the practice of government that Li (2007) defines as the process of rendering technical has, however, given rise to discord between different kinds of 'governmental schemes of improvement'. Within the state bureaucracy, the execution of twenty years of neoliberal reforms has left its mark on the internalized practices of technical experts and public servants, who tend to resist indigenous change. Consequently, the continuation of neoliberal practices articulates and conflicts with indigenous policy. Furthermore, within the MAS' executive and some social movements, the role of the state – traditionally a source of coercion of indigenous peoples – has been strengthened by increasing employment of state-led development schemes. As a result, three kinds of governmental schemes of improvement (that is indigenous, neoliberal, and state-led), or assemblages for social change, have emerged. In Figure II below, I have gathered together and classified the characteristics of each kind of improvement schemes as discussed in the pages of this study.

**Figure II:** Governmental Schemes of Improvement.



In order to enhance analytical clarity of the theoretical inputs of this study, classifications are made on the basis of forms of governmentality, examples of policy frameworks, use and control of resources, and types of sovereignty and territorial arrangements. Therefore, we have to bear in mind that in empirical reality, relations and articulations between different “slots” are intertwined in many complex and intricate ways. All three kinds of governmental schemes of improvement articulate, and often conflict with each other in the practice of government in the contemporary Bolivian process of state transformation, illustrating the insight that the state works in complex and articulated ways in processes of social change.

The question then becomes: which kind of governmental scheme of improvement is granted authority and legitimacy *vis-à-vis* the others? The evidence presented so far has been mixed. It has become clear in the pages of this study that both indigenous and state-led governmental discourses and practices are constructed as a resistance and an alternative to neoliberal colonialism. The articulation between these two, the plurinationalism, provides (ideally) an alternative both to the neoliberal-indigenous alliance of the 1990s under multicultural neoliberalism, and to the histories of the nationalist revolution during which the state repressed indigenous peoples under the rubric of nationalist modernization schemes. My study has, however, indicated that in the process of bringing indigenous policy ideas to the fore of the state, they have become increasingly swallowed by both neoliberal and state-led schemes of development. Many development experts, public servants, and members of the political opposition with initiatives such as regional autonomies, tend to stick to technical frameworks, bureaucratic practices, and political options that maintain continuity with the paradigms of the neoliberal era.

Within the MAS, the pursuit of certain goals – such as the nationalization of natural resources, large scale modernization projects through road building, infrastructure, and plans for industrialization – and the centralization of decision making among the executive and key members of the MAS, show contrasting tendencies to those portrayed by indigenous policy initiatives. Although both take as their main starting points resistance to economic globalization and universal development paradigms, they differ fundamentally in terms of ideal governing patterns and control of natural resources and other assets. From the point of view of indigenous politics, state-led schemes of improvement have taken over the repressive role that transnational corporations and other global actors have had on indigenous lands and territories in the past. This is where neoliberal and state-led models of development articulate: in resource extraction and centralized top-down processes of “modernization”. Consequently, social movements within the MAS have become increasingly split between those opting for indigenous schemes of improvement and those opting for state-led ones. Political frictions between peasant and indigenous movements that the rise of Morales’ regime to power was able to reconcile have burst into flames again, reintroducing contestative politics in relation to the governing regime and its policies. The concrete actions through which ideological contestation plays out as noted in the pages of this study include disagreement over the content of the NDP and the new constitution; over autonomy at regional and local levels; and over resources and meanings in such cases as the TIPNIS and Madidi Park.

Meanwhile, various forms of power and rule also overlap and collide with each other. This conflictive interaction between governmental, disciplinary, and authoritarian forms of power and rule seems to impede and challenge the potential of radically democratizing indigenous ideas by hampering their translation into bureaucratic practice. While Foucault noted that disciplinary and authoritarian forms of power co-exist with governmental forms

even in Western state formation processes, bureaucratic and coercive forms of power tend to be more deeply rooted in many areas of the Global South. In Latin America, for example, long-term historical processes have been strongly influenced by colonial and neocolonial dependencies, authoritarian traditions of rule through *caudillos* and patron-client networks, and corporatist adopting of civil society groups into the hegemony of the state; taken together, these precedents hamper the functioning of more positive, that is, governmental, forms of power. This is demonstrated by the Bolivian example with its different forms of governing and rule: some aiming at more positive and radically democratizing new practices, such as the one I described through the notion of governing pluralities; others contributing to a situation in which rather than becoming empowered subjects of change, individuals and groups of people comprise what I called disciplined masses.

As a result, my study concludes that the contemporary Bolivian state transformation process can be best understood as a contested battlefield between diverging schemes of improvement: neoliberal, indigenous, and state-oriented. I furthermore conclude that in this process, various forms of power and rule overlap and collide with each other. This conflictive interaction between governmental, disciplinary, and authoritarian forms of power and rule impede and challenge the potential of radically democratizing indigenous ideas by hampering their translation into bureaucratic practice. Therefore, while I have portrayed the notion of *vivir bien* as a new, alternative form of ‘decolonial government’, or ‘governmental scheme of improvement’, indigenous ideas have also been shown to be an arena of major political contestations.

By examining Bolivia’s state transformation process, I have been able to explore the limits and applicability of neoliberal governmentality in the Global South in a context of major change. However, there are important questions that require further exploration through a theoretical lens. As the Bolivian policy shift and state transformation process have been fairly recent, this study has focused on examining how new governmental policies are discursively constructed and translated into practice at the level of state bureaucracy. It has, therefore, been beyond the scope of this study to examine how governmentality operates within specific groups of people (such as urban elites or specific indigenous communities) when governmental schemes of improvement change. An important question for future research is to ask how conflict between diverging governmental schemes of improvement affect the self-disciplinary nature of governmental strategies and practices at local levels: whether indigenous forms of government have been able to transform (through biopolitics or biopower) some of the self-disciplinary principles and practices of such groups as urban non-indigenous elites; or, how neoliberal or state-led schemes have affected subject formation in specific indigenous communities. The question to be answered in the future, after the Bolivian process has had a longer time to develop, is whether indigenous ideas have had enough strength and appeal to change people’s internalized ways of thinking and acting.

## 9.4 CHALLENGES OF, AND CONDITIONS FOR, RADICAL DEMOCRATIZATION

The normative contribution of my study to academic knowledge resides in the discussion of the feasibility of the restructuring and transformation of the Bolivian nation-state on the basis of indigenous ideas. In a normative sense, this study can be read as one that maps challenges of, and conditions for, radical political projects in the face of neoliberal governmentality. New social movements, and most specifically indigenous movements, have increasingly challenged ways of doing politics in the Latin America region. Economically, politically, and socially excluded for decades, indigenous scholars, activists, and movements have started to question neoliberal economic globalization and universal development paradigms, as well as the long-term modern project of the Global North (Blaser 2007; Escobar 2010a). The idea of state transformation projects that revolve around indigenous concepts and terminologies derives from the idea that ‘development’ has not meant development for all. In its name, transnational actors such as IFIs, development agencies, and corporations have increased their role in the internal affairs of many of the poorest countries in the Global South. These schemes of ‘positive’ improvement have, more often than not, enhanced the continuation of neocolonial relations that, rather than benefiting those in need, have been beneficial for those who already have the greatest global share of economic and social wellbeing. The poorest people in the Global South, often indigenous peoples, have had little say in the future of their own lives and societies.

The notion of *vivir bien* as an alternative form of policy contains an ideal of radical democratization. Being promoted by indigenous scholars, activists, and movements, it responds to the age-old political goal of indigenous peoples of achieving self-determination over their lands, territories, and natural resources. This would shift the arenas of decision-making from the centralized Bolivian nation-state that has long marginalized the views and participation of its indigenous majorities to self-governing local arenas. It also shifts the focus of rights-holders from individuals in liberal thinking to indigenous communities as collectivities. The idea(l) of democratic community participation shakes up understandings of what democracy is all about, while also raising serious questions about how, for example, such issues as women’s rights and the LGBT rights would be dealt with. From the perspective of indigenous peoples, the promotion of indigenous self-determination enhances the appreciation of pluralism and governing through various political formulations.

This study has shown that to make any radical, large-scale, indigenous transformation project work, it is not enough for it to be dealt with solely at local levels and in global forums: the state is needed even if its role has been seriously questioned in the age of globalization. Yet the state at stake is one which serves both as an object and subject of change: colonial, hierarchical, and centralized characteristics of the state, that in

today's world are often deeply influenced by transnational encounters, are in a need of major transformation, while, at the same time, the state can be used to push forward transformations, as has been demonstrated in the case of Bolivian policy and legislative shift. The formulation of structure-changing (rather than reforming) policy on the basis of indigenous ideas and the implementation of legislative changes transforming the Bolivian nation-state into the Plurinational State have shown that the state, indeed, is an important reference point for indigenous political projects.

Although plurinationalism as radical appreciation of pluralism has been promoted by numerous scholars (García Linera 2007; Quijano 2005; Sousa Santos 2008), and the understanding of the democratizing potential of indigenous ideas has been shared by many in the contemporary Bolivian process of change, their translation into practice has, however, been challenging. If we look at the limits of new indigenous policy, Li (2007) has argued that coercive forms of power tend to be more deeply rooted in many countries of the Global South where uneven capitalist development and structural inequalities prevail. While policy is perceived as a positive (governmental) form of power, it tends, however, to be operationalized in contexts where other, more coercive, forms of power are likely to overrule the effects of democratizing policy. The normative conclusion of this is that the implementation of new radical (indigenous) projects is often so difficult because different, and often contradictory and contested, forms of power (governmental, disciplinary, and authoritarian) are meeting and confronting each other, a phenomenon with global, national, and local characteristics. This, I believe, is the response to the question of why, despite all intentions, radically democratizing political projects in Latin America tend to fail and slide towards more authoritarian poles.

Scholars such as Hansen and Stepputat (2006) and Li (2007) have argued that global relations involve contradictory characteristics: while indigenized, or decolonized, policy may aim to transform the lives of individuals and groups of people in the name of new forms of improvement, the actions of transnational corporations, business sectors, and other forms of North-South relations tend to entail more coercive and authoritarian characteristics that often counteract local and national principles of improvement. An important corollary of this argument is that, if economic globalization and universal development paradigms continue to produce and reproduce structural economic and social inequalities in the Global South, divisions between individuals and groups of people will remain so high that processes of change are likely to remain extremely conflictive because so much is at stake for so many people: both for the rich and for the poor.

I began this study with a reference to the female domestic worker of indigenous origin who had challenged her employer by refusing to obey ethnically and socially determined hierarchies and power relations that, for long, had determined their relationships. According to the employer, the policies and politics of the contemporary governing regime have made indigenous peoples think that they are equal to any other Bolivians.



And, yet, her employee had simply raised her head and looked her straight in the eyes. Making explicit the confrontations between indigenous democratization and other more coercive forms of power and rule, this encounter symbolized what radical democratization in contemporary Bolivia means and why it is so necessary. Despite difficulties in implementation, if indigenous policy ideas have the capacity to lead to a situation in which indigenous peoples will no longer accept the marginalized positions assigned to them, it has served an important purpose. On the other hand, if, despite resistance, it makes traditional political and economic elites aware of how society could be constructed differently, it might have sown seeds for change.

Claudia, the teller of this story, was a new, young, urban public servant, and self-termed revolutionary, working for the state. Being at the center of the state that had served for decades as a playground for transnational conditioning, her commitment to the indigenous cause was also a signal of wider demands among peoples, visibly spreading all across the Global South, that opt for taking the future of their lives and societies into their own hands. While diverging governmental schemes of improvement, that is, indigenous, neoliberal, and state-led, may act as sources of contestations and power struggles, they also represent the plurality on which Bolivian society is constructed. If the meetings of these three schemes were to be successfully translated into articulations rather than contestations and power struggles, radical democratization would no longer be merely a potential but a reality.

The end result notwithstanding, I believe that the domestic worker, the employer, and Claudia will never be the same again. The potential for change is already in all of them.

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# ANNEXES

**Appendix 1.** The Map of Major Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia.



Produced on the basis of Barié (2003: 133) by Miina Blot.

**Appendix 2.** Interviews by the category of interviewees including the number of individual and group interviews and gender aggregated data.

Category of Interviewees	Number of Individual Interviews (m/f*)	Number of Group Interviews (number of persons m/f*)	Number of Interviews, total
Ministers, vice-ministers (inc. ex-ministers)	9 (8/1)		9
Public servants and consultants	17 (14/3)	3 (5/1)	20
Representatives and functionaries of international development organizations	12 (8/4)	1 (2/0)	13
Social movements, indigenous organizations, trade unions, NGOs	7 (4/3)	2 (3/2)	9
Intellectuals	7 (7/0)		7
Political figures from the opposition	2 (1/1)		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>60</b>

\*m = male, f =female